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George & Roberta Taylor

September 1944.

THE PHOENIX AND
THE DWARFS



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TORONTO

*The Phoenix and
the Dwarfs*

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

BY

GEORGE E. TAYLOR *and* GEORGE SAVAGE

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1944

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CHARACTERS

GRANDMOTHER

MASTER CHOU, her son, head man of the Village

LI-HSIEN, the older brother

LI-MENG, the younger brother

KU-LIEN, Li-hsien's wife

LUNG, servant of the Chou Family

MASTER FAN, the Village taxgatherer

MEI-LAN, Fan's daughter

SUN-PAO, high-school friend of Li-meng

FATHER FENG, Sun-Pao's father

FARMER MEI

FARMER TAI

FARMER KAO

RICE MERCHANT WEN

MA } Guerrilla leaders of the Army of
LI } Chiang Kai-shek

BOY

GIRL

FIRST JAPANESE SOLDIER

SECOND JAPANESE SOLDIER

THIRD JAPANESE SOLDIER

GUERRILLAS

VILLAGERS

The entire action takes place in the main room of the Chou Family home in a small village in Northern China.

ACT ONE

SCENE 1. *September, 1931*

SCENE 2. *June, 1936*

ACT TWO

SCENE 1. *May, 1938*

SCENE 2. *The next day*

ACT THREE

September, 1938

INTRODUCTION

THE PHOENIX AND THE DWARFS is a play about a Chinese family in peace and war, and as such stands alone. This introduction, therefore, does not deal specifically with the play. It aims merely to present for readers who may be unfamiliar with modern China, some of the background of the conditions and events against which the action of the play takes place.

When the needs of war threw the Chinese and American peoples into military alliance against a common enemy, cooperation took on a new form and had to be carried out by new men. The new form has already become the law of the land. We have removed the last vestiges of imperial privilege—the rights of extra-territoriality, the treaty ports, and the maintenance of ships and troops to protect them. The exclusion law is a thing of the past. China is recognized as a fully sovereign state, and Chiang Kai-shek has taken part in the highest conferences of the United Nations; equality is officially established. But only experience can give it substance; for all the legal arrangements of governments cannot force the American and the Chinese peoples to accept in each other qualities they do not know or feel. The relations between governments being no sure guide to those between peoples, the quality of Chinese-American cooperation must be decided finally in the hearts and minds of ordinary men.

The Chinese and the Americans who cooperate today are not those who had most to do with American-Chinese relations yesterday. If they have prejudices and misconceptions, these are at least not the ones of the earlier age of unequal status—when China, as Sun Yat-sen pointed out, was a colony of all the powers. Our thousands of missionaries, educators, and businessmen either have returned to the United States or remain in Japanese internment camps; the Chinese living or studying in this country are unable, except for the important few, to return to China. Those Chinese in China who sympathized most with the American point of view, and knew us best, are not so influential today as they were before

the war ; nor are they associated with the army, the most important group with which we have to deal. The new relation must be conceived and born with new men.

The first step towards the new relation has been, almost of necessity, one of mutual disillusionment. Thousands of American troops, mostly ignorant of China and unprepared psychologically for the job, were poured into that country to assist in the struggle against Japan at a time when the Chinese were already weary and exhausted by six years of war. They could hardly be expected to adjust themselves immediately to the situation.

Many of them did not. The natural reaction of young, untraveled Americans was shock at China's lack of material comforts, mechanical skill, military equipment, and American-style organization and discipline. They came to believe that the Chinese were capable of any and every form of corruption, and found it difficult to sympathize with and understand the exemption of Chinese college students from military service.

The shock was all the greater because we had grown up with a picture of China as unreal as it was rosy—a picture of the “heroic Chinese” who for over four years before Pearl Harbor had beaten the Japanese with bare hands and harried the aggressors from their farms, villages, and hillsides in guerrilla warfare. This great people, we assumed, shared our democratic ideas and held us in the highest esteem. It was disconcerting to discover that democracy in China was more a hope than a reality ; it was even more disconcerting to find that the Chinese did not have a very high opinion of our own military ability, for the very good reason that our entry into the war had led to an immediate worsening of their own position. There were times when the general mood was ugly.

The rosy, unrealistic, and ill formed picture of China that we conceived from a distance, and for that matter still hold, developed partly because Chinese propaganda encouraged it, partly because we wanted to believe it. Now that we are painfully acquiring a more realistic view of the Chinese, we can look back and see that to many Americans China was a place for international slumming. We hated poverty but loved the poor, especially the deserving poor. The masses of China were an object of relief, and it is a tribute to our generosity that we poured out our money so lavishly. But together with philanthropy often goes sentimentalism, the big-brother feel-

ing, the tendency to think well of the object of generosity, whose poverty is explained not as the result of laziness and improvidence, but as the will of the Lord. This attitude of helping the underdog entered largely into our thinking; China to us was the Cinderella of the nations.

At the same time, it is true, there have always been many Americans whom no stretch of the imagination could accuse of sentimentality in their judgment of the Chinese. The treaty-port businessman came in contact mainly with Chinese of the lower classes and was usually fond of them. They were excellent servants for whose adroitness in securing "squeeze" he had an ill concealed respect, and against whose strategy of passive resistance he matched his wits. From a knowledge of China on this level emerged a conception of the people as loyal in personal relations, honest in business dealings, and corrupt in public affairs. The family, according to the stereotype, came before the nation, personal good before public good.

Americans have always known the Chinese people better than they knew the ruling classes, for the mass of the population was on the whole the object of interest to our philanthropists, educators, missionaries, and businessmen. There were, of course, the thousands of Chinese students who studied either in America, or in American-supported institutions in China. We knew something about these men, who, before the Japanese invasion, held important public positions. As they spoke English we naturally saw much of them and assumed that they wielded more influence than they actually did. Few Americans became acquainted with the Chinese from the military academies who ran the armies, and who are so important today.

It was easy for us to overlook the fact that China has a great military tradition. The Chinese who came here to study turned for the most part to the art of government rather than to that of war; there are few Chinese graduates of West Point, but there are hundreds of graduates in political science from universities and colleges all over the country. We were not particularly interested in war and preparation for war; we left it to the Germans to train China's armies and the Japanese to study their military potential. Nor were the Chinese themselves anxious to persuade us that they were a warlike people, because their security depended upon mainte-

nance of the peace in the Pacific. The scholar-official tradition was also very powerful in China, and scholar-officials (which most of the students who came to the United States hoped to become) looked with contempt on the soldier and on the military art. The civilian always wants to maintain control over government and therefore runs down the military in time of peace.

The scholar-official view of China naturally predominated abroad. We are therefore well acquainted with the works of Confucius but not with those of Sun Tzu, the great writer on military strategy. In studying Chinese history we have accepted at its face value a China which is really an idealization created by the wishful thinking of the scholar-officials. In its extreme form this picture is that of a great peace-loving people, of an orderly democratic society in which age and wisdom are respected, of an industrious peasantry, skilled artisans, great poets, immortal painters and calligraphists, of a land in which the pen is mightier than the sword. We think of a highly civilized people occasionally overrun by barbarian tribes who in due time are absorbed.

The picture is not so much untrue as true only in part. We have to recognize that the Chinese, in their very long history, have been fully conquered only twice, and the last conquest, that of the Manchus, had much of the nature of a civil war. For most of the modern period the peasantry have seen much more of military than of civil government. The army today is clearly the dominant political force in the country.

Our natural tendency is to think of the American-trained Chinese as the sole torchbearers of progress in China, and of the dominant army officers as reactionary. Many Americans who know China well are depressed by the fact that the Chinese "intellectuals" are suffering economic distress and political eclipse, partly because the army is necessarily more important in time of war. This is a loss to China. But there are other channels through which change may come, such as the modern Chinese army, and there are other things that the development of a strong and free China needs even more than a Ph.D. from Harvard or Columbia. We may still like best the Chinese we know, but we should approach without prejudice a China in which they no longer dominate the scene.

The other side of the picture is that many Chinese, above all those who have been most in contact with us, have numerous

misconceptions about us. Some think of the United States as the rich uncle who can be flattered and cajoled into almost anything. Others think far too highly of us because their personal prestige in China was bound up with the prestige of the United States in China. Many of these were not only disappointed but also surprised when we did not rush to China's assistance in 1937. It is as difficult for a Chinese to arrive at a realistic view of the United States as for an American to arrive at a realistic view of China.

The Chinese have learned by hard experience that they have to stand alone and rely on their own strength; they have found new sources of inner strength; they are adjusting themselves to international recognition of their equality in the family of nations. They readjusted even their estimates of themselves when they saw us driven out of the Pacific so quickly by an enemy they had fought to a standstill. The legend of American strength had to take a sharp revision downwards, and not until our victories in the Southwest Pacific did our prestige start to go up again. It is unlikely that the naive idealization of America will ever be widespread again; indeed, the other attitude is more likely to prevail—the hard, tough, cynical, self-confident attitude, highly critical of the western democracies, of their internal arrangements and external policies.

Come what may, Americans and Chinese must make up their minds about each other. Forced as allies in war to work together on every level of activity, they cannot possibly avoid judgment of each other's quality and purposes. China as a country has been given every measure of acceptance; but it does not follow that we shall esteem the people as highly as we esteem the country. The events which compel mutual reexamination do not of themselves guarantee the growth of mutual respect and faith. In fact, the new situation may forge either of two broad attitudes on our part towards the Chinese.

We may come to accept them not only in theory but in fact as equal and responsible members of world society, capable of contributing to a sane world order. Or we may end up with the feeling that the Chinese are neither equal nor responsible and should be treated as a cross between wards of civilization and poor though deserving relations. Almost anything can come out of the present situation.

A great deal naturally depends on the Chinese themselves. Our

faith in them can be built only on the quality of their faith in themselves and the nature of their national purposes. No power on earth can stop the urgent interest of the American people in the domestic affairs of their ally. Our very recognition of China internationally forces us to find an answer to the question whether they are strong enough to pull their weight. The Chinese will feed this interest if they are wise, with full and open discussion of their domestic problems. There could be no greater danger to the development of full understanding between the two nations than for the Chinese or ourselves to fall into the temptation of discouraging open discussion of domestic problems. We can make that interest acceptable if we either give up discussing China as a "problem" or admit that we are as much a "problem" as China. Certainly there is no basis for respect and cooperation short of the fullest knowledge by each nation of the other's quality and purposes.

II

The ideas we have lavished upon the East during the last hundred and fifty years should be looked upon as seeds planted in foreign soil rather than as molds into which foreigners should fit. Yet the mold theory is the one with which we have approached the matter. So have many Chinese, especially those educated in the United States. They took back to China an intimate knowledge, somewhat bookish, of American political and economic life. Many were better equipped to fit into American than Chinese conditions, for the very good reason that they knew more about them. This is especially true of students of political science, the most popular subject of study. An intimate knowledge of American government often accompanied an abysmal ignorance of how a Chinese village was run.

When such men returned to China they usually went into government or teaching. Those who went into government soon discovered that their knowledge had little relevance to the workings of the Chinese system. It would be a long time before they would be called upon to run a representative system in a political democracy. Those who went into teaching taught what they knew, and what they knew had very little relevance to conditions outside the classroom. The American-trained Chinese in China had this

danger for us: they formed a pool which always reflected our own image. It was inevitable that we should exaggerate their importance in Chinese life and flatter ourselves that the pool irrigated the mass. We ignored the toughness and strength of the military-agrarian China.

There is no need for us to apologize for our program in China; rather we should adjust ourselves to the idea that China will arrive at a Chinese solution of the problem of survival in the modern world. No mold that we can make would be strong enough to contain the forces which our ideas have set in motion. Those ideas are but one of the many streams which have flowed into the life of the Chinese people. People take from others the things that they want and can assimilate; that is why China and Japan, exposed to the same American influences, have followed such different courses. They never had very much in common.

Chinese and Japanese do not even look alike. The excellent little booklet which is given to American troops going to China contains detailed instructions on how to tell Chinese from Japanese, because we popularly assume that they are alike. The eager soldier is told to examine their feet and look for the calloused big toe of the Japanese, to get them to pronounce certain sounds and take careful note of their facial characteristics, bony structure, and physical size. Actually Chinese differ from Japanese to such an extent that anyone who has lived for a short while in the Orient should be able to distinguish one from the other, with no great margin of error. It would be much more difficult for the Chinese to instruct their troops to distinguish Germans from Americans.

Chinese and Japanese do not think of themselves as of one "race." If they did Japan would find it much easier to put across the hoax of the "race war." The Chinese need no telling that aspirations to be a "master race" know no color line. They are also aware that Japan's claim to be leading Asiatic races in their fight for emancipation from the white races is designed to confuse Asia, in the hope that the imperialism of the Japanese militarists will not be noticed.

The deepest contrasts between China and Japan arise out of their differing institutions, traditions, and history. The political climate of ancient China, where it was held that if the Emperor ceased to rule properly he could be overthrown, was totally different from that of ancient and modern Japan, where there has been no

theory of revolt. The revolution which brought Japan into the modern world, the Meiji Restoration, did not change to any appreciable degree the basic ideas of the Japanese state; it took account of some western practices but ignored the liberal element in western political ideas. The Nationalist revolution in China came in with a democratic philosophy, republicanism, and a broad social basis.

China abolished feudalism centuries ago, substituting for it a bureaucratic system of government in which officials were chosen by public examination. By and large, the scholar-official was the dominant type; certainly no militarist could rule without him. Japan was still feudal in the nineteenth century and has much feudalism today. The military tradition, the social and political supremacy of the warrior, has remained dominant. Blood is more important than ability. The Chinese peasant may have been poorer, but he was always freer than the Japanese.

The Chinese outlook is sophisticated, cosmopolitan, urbane, and inquiring; we immediately feel at home with the educated Chinese. The Japanese outlook is cramped, provincial, aggressive, and suspicious. The Chinese sense of humor is conspicuous and congenial; the Japanese, at least to us, seem overearnest and humorless. The Chinese are rationalists, the Japanese are superstitious and intuitionist. The Chinese are practical, secular, and believe in compromise; the Japanese are unrealistic, religious, and uncompromising.

The strongest force in Asia, as in Europe, is not race or religion but nationalism. While the national spirit is not one of the things on which China and Japan differ, at least quantitatively, the differing stories of Chinese and Japanese nationalism correspond to the differences in their social development. For us the major problem now is one of adjusting ourselves to Chinese nationalism.

The Chinese are an old people but a new nation. Through a great part of human history they were able to do a good many things much better than Europeans. Before the age of industrialism gave Western Europe the keys to the world, the Chinese excelled both Europe and Japan in the arts of production and government at a time when agriculture was the world's chief industry. Compared with Chinese agriculture, European was primitive. Travelers of the eighteenth century came back from China marveling at the size and cleanliness of the cities, at the order and efficiency of

the government, the dignity and industriousness of a law-abiding people. Chinese ideas of government appealed strongly to the physiocrats of France and, through them, may have influenced indirectly the framers of the American constitution.

At a time when population was a measure of national strength, China boasted perhaps the largest population in the world. As evidence of the respect in which she was held we have only to recall that George III, King of England, had to accept China's decision on the methods and extent of trade between the two countries. The Emperor of China replied to his request for more trade by refusing to open up any ports in addition to Canton. Even there trade was to continue only during his own pleasure and the good behavior of the English. There was nothing that George III could do about it.

Such was the position of China before the industrial revolution. Compare her situation in 1842, when she was compelled to accept defeat at the hands of the British, with that of a few decades earlier when the Son of Heaven at Peking did not feel it necessary to grant audience to the British emissary. In 1842 a country with but a fraction of the population of China was able to bring that great country to its knees because it had discovered new techniques of production and new weapons of war.

We know what has happened in Europe. The question that concerns us now is why the same industrial revolution did not spread as rapidly in China as it did in Europe and later in Japan. Why has China found it so difficult to adopt the new methods of factory production when she was so far ahead of us in agricultural production? Why was the modern state so long in developing in China when it sprang to birth so rapidly in Japan? Our opinion of China is largely our answer to these questions.

Perhaps the most important thing we have discovered about contemporary China is the strength of the military-agrarian China. Of this two classes form the backbone: the millions of poor peasants, and the much smaller number of landed gentry. In a country where four-fifths of the people still get their living directly from the land, the peasant is the dominant type; he is the chief producer and the raw material of the army. The strength of China, indeed, lies in its unspoiled manhood.

The typical Chinese peasant does not have the qualities of am-

bition and individual enterprise which Americans instinctively expect. It is easy to admire his physical build and his endurance. He is usually illiterate, however, and amazingly ignorant of the geography of his own country, let alone the rest of the world. But he is friendly and industrious, cheerful without optimism in the American sense. There is little that is cheap about him; he makes an impression of dignity and honesty. Though ignorant of many things, he is a master of his trade. There is nothing about farming in the Chinese manner that he does not understand, and his worries are many—drought, flood, locusts, taxes, soldiers, and forced labor. The peasant is conservative, suspicious of words and promises but impressed by action. If you can show him that new seeds bring better results, he has no hesitation in using them. But it is difficult to get him to make changes in the social order of the village and the family.

The peasant is deferential towards the village gentry, to whom he is usually in debt, who control the local market for rice or wheat and run the affairs of the village. The gentry are usually able to read and write. They are the backbone of Chinese civilization; they provide the officials, the officers of the army, the painters and poets, the writers and thinkers. Cultivated, fond of good living and good conversation, particular as to dress and insistent on protocol, averse to manual labor but skilled in every known form of extracting money and goods from the peasantry, the gentry can make or break the development of the Chinese people. They are largely responsible for the China we love, deplore, admire, and must deal with.

Contrast the gentry with the peasantry upon whose back the fabric of Chinese life is really built. It is the peasant who does the real work and is the chief producer, who works from dawn to dusk to pay taxes from which he benefits little. He is worse off than the feudal peasant, for he has all the disadvantages of a free economy without the protection of paternalism. The most patient and industrious of men, he turns against his society only when he is driven off the land and reduced to begging or banditry. No wonder that few divined the inner strength of the peasantry in the face of Japanese invasion.

A large part of that inner strength has depended on the cohesiveness and traditions of the old-style family, which, in spite of all the changes of recent times, still remains a dominating influence

in rural China. This family has been authoritarian in structure, the father, or head of the family, owning the main means of production, the land. He decided on the crop, the marketing; he was the arbiter of practically all questions concerning the family. It is difficult to overestimate the degree to which sons and daughters depended upon their parents in the old-style village family. Children found the question as to whom and when they should marry decided for them, and if they were allowed to study in modern schools and universities they were expected to bring not only honor but also wealth to the family hearth, and to increase its lands.

It is not as if children were able to find outside means of subsistence that would enable them to defy authority if they resented it or were stirred by new ideas. Agriculture is the main industry, and there are few outlets for the ambitious young man. Education is still the main channel to wealth, and education can only be acquired with the support of parents. Children cannot look forward to a time when they will be free with full rights as citizens; they become more or less independent when the family head dies and the land is equally divided among the sons, but they are still tied to the land.

In practice the family has not been so authoritarian as it is in theory. The love of parents for children, the varieties of parental temperament, all have tempered relations within the group. This is especially true of the position of women, who in law have had very few rights indeed. A woman usually has found her marriage arranged for her and has been subject to divorce by her husband for a variety of reasons, such as want of filial piety, talkativeness, jealousy, failure to produce a son, incurable disease, or leaving home without her husband's permission. There have been few opportunities for her outside the home, and the remarkable freedom which modern China gives to its women applies only to a small group at the top of the social scale. There has been only one respectable career—marriage.

In practice Chinese women of all classes are given great consideration and considerable freedom. This is especially true of those who bear sons. A capable woman can exercise a great deal of authority in the family; she is never the butt of male aggressiveness as are women in Japan. No one can live long in China and travel its countryside without being impressed with the dignity, the poise

and ability of China's women. The part they have played in the revolutions and changes of modern times is living witness to their qualities, which could only develop in a social system flexible in practice, however inflexible in theory. The inferior social position of Chinese women does not mean inferior human beings any more than the superior position of American women automatically produces superior human beings.

A large number of the Chinese people live very restricted lives. If farmers lived in isolated houses instead of in villages as they do, their social life would be nonexistent. As it is, there is a sense of community in the village where everyone knows everyone else's affairs. Public opinion in the village is indeed the chief policeman. The Chinese village is not democratic; it is run by the village gentry and their hangers-on, not by a democratically elected village council. Some western writers have described the village as democratic because the village handles a great proportion of its own affairs. In European tradition the growth of democracy has often come by limiting centralized authority; decentralization therefore is often confused with democracy. But the issue is important only in connection with the larger questions that confront both gentry and peasantry.

Can the gentry provide the leadership to make China a going concern in the modern world? Can they revitalize the village life of China, reorganize the productive system, provide a dignified life for the mass of the people? Are they worthy of the undoubted quality of the peasantry?

The task is enormous, and judgment must be generous. Certainly it would be foolish to consider this class or that as wholly reactionary or wholly progressive. If the gentry and peasantry have blocked the most constructive and best intentioned measures of economic and political progress, they have provided with leadership and sacrifice the most amazing social movements of our times. Nothing in China can happen without involving them; they are the subjects as well as the objects of progress.

III

The condition of the villages is undoubtedly the overriding long-term problem of the Chinese people. The system of farming which was once so powerful is now out of date and cannot be

modernized so easily as some might suppose. There are no easy short cuts, such as the liquidation of the gentry and the distribution of their lands among the poor. It is the system itself, not the people who live by it, which must be tackled.

Chinese farming is lavish in the use of human labor but not in the use of capital and machinery. Where fields are cultivated as carefully as we cultivate our gardens, human labor must obviously be plentifully provided.

The density of population on the Great Plain of China is many times greater than that of the most congested agricultural communities of America, since six-sevenths of the people are concentrated in one-third of the land area of the country.

This is usually where water is most plentiful, for the secret of China's former agricultural success lay in the skill with which her farmers controlled water. Over 40 per cent of Chinese agriculture depends upon the control of water by dikes, drainage, and irrigation. When war or other causes interfere with the maintenance of the dikes the whole of Chinese farming suffers. It was bad enough for the Chinese that the present conflict destroyed most of the newly acquired industries, it is even more serious that it has undermined in many areas the complicated system of water control. On one occasion, in the earlier years of the war, the Chinese themselves blew up the dikes on the Yellow River in order to flood the Japanese armies. No one has ever estimated the effects on the agriculture of the area.

This system of intensive farming lies at the back of most of Chinese social life. It is one reason why the birth rate is so high: farmers must have children, particularly sons, to work their lands. Because the death rate is so high—one-half of the people born do not reach the age of twenty-eight—children must be continually produced in order to guarantee an adequate supply of man power.

There are many reasons why this once great system of farming is in decay. It is not only a relative condition due to the application of science to agriculture in the west. The system has faults of its own. The fact is that China has not been producing enough food to feed its own population for some time; rice and wheat have been imported for many years. American and Chinese experts agree that Chinese farms are too small, and that not much can be

done to increase production until the farm unit is increased. The Chinese farmer not only lacks capital with which to purchase fertilizers, machinery, and seeds; he is usually deeply in debt to the larger landowner. This condition is tied up with the conditions of tenancy.

It is quite common for a tenant to pay a rental of half his harvest. Nor are many of the peasants who own their land much better off, for what they do not pay in rent they pay in taxes. The man who is too poor, or without sufficient influence to protect himself from avaricious taxgatherers, is squeezed to the limit. The big landlords have commonly avoided payment of most of the land tax, a fact which naturally increases the burden on those who cannot avoid payment. There is a natural process, therefore, by which owners become tenants and tenants are finally forced off the land altogether.

The Chinese village is in a bad way. There is no agreement about which of the many factors that cause its troubles is the most decisive; in fact, the only thing that seems to be true is that no one single reason, such as war, or taxation, small farm units, or lack of capital, is responsible for the situation. Every American expert who goes to China is first impressed by the problems he knows most about. To some, sound administration is the answer; to others, improved animal husbandry or lower taxes, or agricultural credit, or scientific marketing, or cooperatives, or education. But experience has shown that it is difficult to make progress along one front. If you increase the margin of production of the peasant by providing him with better seed and cheap money, there is no guarantee that he will be able to prevent that margin of production from being absorbed in higher rent or taxes. Certainly the landed gentry have a centuries-old skill in draining the last drop of blood out of the peasant.

The position of the landed gentry is closely bound up with the tax-collecting system. In many parts of the country land taxes are still collected by hereditary officials who jealously guard their one professional qualification, a knowledge of the land, its owners, and the tax assessments. As the poor peasant cannot read or write, he is clearly at the mercy of the tax collector. To make things worse, the collector is usually on very good terms with the landed gentry, whose domination of village affairs gives him the backing of au-

thority for almost any extortion. In return the big landlords often escape paying most of their taxes.

This means that in order to meet the magistrate's quota, heavier burdens must be put on those who do not have the influence to protect themselves. A process is set up, therefore, by which owner-farmers are forced into tenantry and tenants are finally pushed off the land altogether. The peasant sells his good lands to pay his taxes; then he rents it back at exorbitant rates and sells more land to pay his rent or his debts and is finally left landless. Last of all go his house and belongings, and he is left with the choice of becoming a soldier, starving, or emigrating. There is no social insurance, no labor unions, and few charities to support him. When the land goes, the family goes with it. What is there left?

The difficulties in the way of reforming China's agricultural system are impressive. It is as if a Chinese were to ask us to solve overnight the inadequacies of our own economic system in times of depression. War, which brings our system to its highest possible productive power, reduces China's productive capacity because it consumes man power for the army and consumes capital by imposing even higher taxes. China has no machines to take the place of men in production, and the tax burden was already so high that any increase further lowers the peasants' capacity to produce. The resources of an impoverished peasantry have to be drained for the purchase of materials of war, not from factories which employ Chinese, but from foreign countries where costs are high and the rate of exchange unfavorable.

Many a young American-trained Chinese idealist has broken his heart and ruined his career in the effort to improve the lot of his fellow men. But what could a young magistrate do in the way of reform if he did not have the cooperation of the village gentry? It was easy to pass laws in Nanking but difficult to enforce them in the villages. To do so required a complete overhauling of local administration. That called for a new, loyal, and competent bureaucracy; but the first effect of modern education was to deepen the gulf between the educated and the uneducated and to make it more difficult than ever for scholars and officials to understand or sympathize with the problems of the peasant. Nothing has marked China quite so much as the tradition of the scholar-official who scorned manual labor and cultivated long fingernails to prove that

he never indulged in it. When the war began, the job of reorganizing village government and of tackling the problems of the farmer had barely begun.

Americans are naturally surprised that Chinese college students are exempt from military service while Americans are sent to fight in China's skies. This is not due to an unwillingness to fight, for hundreds of Chinese students have died in the revolutionary battles or faced persecution for their opinions. In this matter the government argues quite rightly that China has never had enough men of modern education to go around, and that, since the destruction of most of her universities by the Japanese, the supply is going to be even shorter. The argument has force and, stated in this way, is easier for us to accept. The American is probably much more annoyed with the traditional contempt of the Chinese scholar for the military profession—an attitude which a great and tragic war has not yet completely dispelled—than with the temporary exemption of a special group.

On this question we have to keep our sights high. The fact that so many educated Chinese are pilots and mechanics and have therefore become accustomed to getting their hands dirty is in itself a social revolution. To ask an educated Chinese to do manual labor is as incongruous as asking a longshoreman to wear a silk hat. It is not done.

There has always been a sharp distinction between the men who went in for a military career and those who went in for an official, bureaucratic life. The latter profession might well be compared with the ministry in America: Chinese have somewhat the same attitude toward it. While it is perfectly true that by American standards China's armies are ill equipped, poorly trained, and in the lower ranks badly led, no one who has studied Chinese history can deny the Chinese a profound knowledge of military strategy. If Rommel had read the works of Sun Tzu, as someone has pointed out, he would not have waited for defeat at El Alamein. The way in which the Chinese dealt with the Japanese invasion was the first large-scale example of how to deal with "lightning war." The Soviet observers in China learned many things from the Sino-Japanese War which they later applied against the Germans, and our own Colonel Carlson trained his Marine "Raiders" in methods of guerrilla fighting largely borrowed from the Chinese.

The Chinese met the Japanese invasion with carefully calculated strategy. First they held the Japanese for three months at Shanghai with the few German-trained divisions at their disposal, then they fell back into the interior and brought into play Chiang Kai-shek's famous "magnetic strategy." With a full knowledge of the most important geographical keys to the occupation of China, the Chinese arranged their armies in such a way as to hold the key places at the sacrifice of others, less important. They put the Japanese in the position of a man in a swimming pool: he can swim wherever he wishes but can never displace the water around him—it follows him wherever he goes, it moves with his every movement.

There are several reasons why China was not able to put on a strong counterattack after the Japanese had been fully extended and fought to a standstill. One is that the Chinese, like ourselves, underestimated the economic strength of Japan and indulged in far too much wishful thinking about the possibilities of social revolution in that country. At the same time, however, the Chinese did not expect their own economic system to suffer as much as it did. It was not only the loss of rich producing areas, but also the loss of key communication centers such as Ichang that complicated an already difficult situation. After the second year of war it became incredibly difficult and expensive to move rice and other supplies from one area to another. Widespread famines, some of them deliberately maneuvered by the Japanese, decreased the volume of agricultural production. Malnutrition sapped the vitality of the army; many of the soldiers had to eat two-year-old rice which had lost most of its nutritive value. By and large it is the breakdown in the economic system which has accounted for the long period of comparative military inactivity.

The most spectacular and obvious sign of economic breakdown is inflation. Price increases stagger the imagination. A bus ride costs twenty-five Chinese dollars; a pair of shoes, the equivalent of eighty dollars in American money. Basic commodities like rice and flour are almost beyond the reach of salaried officials. Few of them, indeed, would be alive today if the government had not made rice allotments to officials and teachers—which meant enormous power and political control in the hands of the government. It is probably true that Chinese have had less success with the problem of inflation than with almost any other wartime question.

In view of the sufferings from many years of war the wonder is not that things are as bad as they are but that China has come through at all. What has come to pass is that military-agrarian China, with all its problems and inefficiency but also its great inner strength, is now relatively much stronger than it was in 1937. When the Japanese destroyed most of China's newly created industries and overran the bulk of her railway system, when they took over the seat of Chinese banking and the centers of higher education, they destroyed the handiwork, the strength, and the prestige of the group which had done so much to modernize the country between 1911 and 1937.

The men who were modernizing Chinese education, developing modern banking, transportation, and industry, men who were leaders in natural science, are now many of them in rags, subsisting on government subsidies. They have lost in political influence to those who control the two great forces left in China today: the army and the agrarians, those who do the fighting and those who produce the food.

In some ways the development of China has been hastened as well as hindered by the war. The peculiar nature of the fighting, especially the burden it has thrown upon the producers of food, has compelled the Chinese to concentrate upon agriculture as a human rather than a technical problem. It would have taken years of peaceful development to bring the intellectuals and the peasantry into the close human contact that invasion and occupation have forced.

The change in the mood and status of students is a case in point. Before 1937 the student body was practically a state within a state; the student was the soul of the nation. In his tortured mind were reflected all the problems, the frustrations, the changes, hopes, and ideals of the Chinese people. Students tried to influence national policy by parades and demonstrations, by swarming into the national capital and standing in the rain outside government buildings until high officials gave them audience. They were one of the chief military objectives of the Japanese army, which helped thereby to bring about what it least expected, the harnessing of the students to the forces of popular resistance.

The spiritual regeneration of the students, their merging into the life of the people, is one of the great stories of the war. It is

matched only by the growth of peasant nationalism. Out of this new consciousness of national destiny and the forging together of all classes in China has come that feeling for China's problems in human terms which was always the first condition of their solution.

IV

The story of the way in which the Chinese people found themselves is the real inner history of the Chinese revolution. When the armies of Chiang Kai-shek left Canton in 1926 on their victorious march by the inland route to Hankow the revolutionaries expected that they would destroy the enemy within and without the gate. The task of the revolution was to eliminate foreign imperialism and domestic war lords. Actually the building up of a modern state consumed the energies of the revolutionary leaders. By the accident of history, when the two branches of the revolution finally came together again it was not against the British or the Americans, but against the Japanese that they tested their strength. It is partially for that reason, perhaps, that one of the greatest changes in the temper of the nation took place without our feeling its full emotional impact. If the Chinese had been fighting us instead of the Japanese, acceptance of their fighting qualities would have been much easier.

One result of the split in the revolution was to limit, to some extent, the spread of political consciousness among the Chinese people. Unity and nationalism would have been easier perhaps to achieve in the spiritual sense if the revolution had gone on to fight the foreigners in China. As it was, the administrative and military structure of unity turned out to be the major accomplishment of the years before 1937. There were many who, deceived by the ebbing tide of popular enthusiasm for the revolution, thought that Chiang Kai-shek's government in Nanking was fabricating a lifeless system which would collapse like a house of cards when the wind blew. The truth is that China had to build her house, find the materials, live in it, and protect it—all at the same time. In the event, it turned out that the Chinese people felt they had a far greater stake in the new China than many had supposed. There is no question but the temper of the Chinese people ex-

pressed through students, professors, officials, and politicians, rising in anger at the continued aggression of Japan, had much to do with the formation of a united front and the final decision to make a stand in 1937.

To those who knew the condition of the Chinese peasantry such a stand seemed brave but futile. How could peasants ignorant of the issues, burdened with taxes, suspicious of their own government, and lacking in national spirit assist in repelling invasion? In other countries, it was argued, every village would be a fort. In China, however, the villagers would not even feed Chinese troops. Why, urged the critics, should the villages support a government which had done so little for them, which had, in fact, robbed them to feed the cities, to create beautiful buildings in Nanking and great armies which would never defend them? Many also looked with scorn on the Americanized youth at the universities, whose demonstrations for war against Japan had seemed but the irresponsible gestures of gilded youth. No one could imagine how they could bridge the gap, almost a gap in civilization, between themselves and the peasants.

The Japanese actually discovered resistance to be toughest where they had expected it to be weakest—among the students and the peasants. In its simplest terms, this happened on a local and on a national scale through the bridging of the gap between the educated and the uneducated, and the birth of national self-respect. The Chinese people, more especially some of the leaders, discovered that China had to rely in this crisis upon her own unaided effort, and that she had the inner strength to do so.

There were many trained "leaders" who found no one to lead. Before the war students had been told, and they believed implicitly, that they were to be the saviors of their country. There was bred an hysterical wild-eyed nationalism which, to the critical, seemed to be without substance because few of those who professed the determination to "save China" were willing even to live in a village if they could possibly find a job in town. For the educated classes of China, the Japanese had a contempt as deep as that in which they held the peasantry. In fact they thought more highly of the peasantry as a potential source of food, labor, and taxes. They laughed at the feeble prewar efforts of university students to take up military training. They feared only their ideas; and

these, they calculated, could be eliminated by physical destruction of schools, books, and students.

The rise of popular resistance took place first in North China, where the conditions for it were first established. The Japanese established these conditions because they were the victims of their own analysis. They overran the major railroad lines and occupied the chief cities of North China within four months. Having routed the provincial armies of the north, they were in no hurry to undertake the occupation of the hinterland because they expected no trouble from that quarter. Nor would there have been any trouble if the impact of invasion had not driven into the hinterland the braver spirits who refused to tolerate life under the occupation. Under the leadership of a few men with a program, there gathered enough educated men and women to restore the civil administration of the hinterland, from which many of the magistrates had fled, and to start training guerrilla armies.

By the spring of the next year, 1938, when the Japanese discovered that things were stirring in the vast areas between the railroad lines, the time for unopposed occupation had already passed. With a propaganda campaign which must be considered as one of the greatest achievements of its kind, the men who composed the new provincial government had convinced the peasants of an area including some fourteen million people that the impossible could be achieved. The peasantry had to be convinced of two main ideas—that they had a common interest in resisting the Japanese, and, much more important, that it was possible to resist effectively.

The methods employed to spread these ideas were skillfully adapted to the limited means at hand. First, small guerrilla units were trained, the raw material for which came not from the mercenary troops of defeated war-lord armies, but from the peasants in the fields. These units were indoctrinated far more with political ideas than with military training. They came to be the backbone of the propaganda machine. Next in importance was the use of the drama, which led to the birth of the propaganda theater. It was typical of prewar China that revolt against the classical Chinese drama took the form of slavish imitation of the western theater, which was taken over with content, lighting effects, female actors, and all. The new propaganda theater, however, was Chinese to the core. It retained from the classical stage the informality, the

lack of scenery, and the tradition of intimate contact between actors and audience; it took from the West dramatic form and structure. The results were extraordinary. The plays themselves, written in haste and often in danger, were put on by traveling groups of students. They had a message to get across, an audience to persuade. They lacked nothing in vitality and urgency; audiences took an active part in the melodramatic scenes and always made clear their approval or disapproval of the issues put before them.

Other means of propaganda included leaflets and booklets for those who could read them, and speeches by political officers on any and every occasion. There was one medium, revolutionary songs, which appealed to all and probably did as much to sustain peasant nationalism as the theater did to arouse it.

The Japanese set out to crush the newly organized government by destroying its administrative center. The government moved on to another village without much trouble, because it had very few impedimenta, using perhaps as much paper to administer fourteen million people for a month as an American high school would use in one day. But the Japanese systematically destroyed thirty villages on their way from the railroad to their objective, and by so doing both confirmed everything the guerrillas had told the peasants about them and added new recruits to the movement. It was indeed the story of Japanese atrocities whipped up with all the arts of propaganda that provided the emotional background to peasant resistance.

The quality of the Chinese people comes out clearly if we take time to understand the concept of guerrilla warfare which they were persuaded to accept. Remember that these people represent a cross-section of Chinese village life. There are the landed gentry (at least those who have not run away), the artisans and craftsmen, and then the mass of poor peasants, ignorant of everything except farming. Suspicious of government as being in the main a collector of taxes, jealous of the land and respectful towards authority, the peasants had little background to understand a new situation; yet they came to practice a form of warfare which was both sophisticated and exacting.

Some light is thrown on the nature of this warfare by the story of one of the early expeditions against the Japanese-held railroad. Several hundred peasants were organized to approach the railroad

at night, remove a section of the rails, and bury it some ten miles away. The expedition was successfully accomplished, but within a very short time the Japanese had the rails in position again by employing the very simple device of offering money to the peasants to bring them back. This showed the political training and political morale which must be achieved if guerrilla warfare was to be successful. Obviously the spontaneous cooperation of the whole population had to be assured before success could be hoped for; blind obedience would never be enough. Every man had to understand his part in the whole operation as well as in the particular task.

Guerrilla warfare as practiced by the Chinese was based on the assumption that it was an essential arm of positional warfare without which it would be nothing but romantic nonsense. To this very day, guerrilla areas behind Japanese lines act like Japanese-absorbing sponges to the east of the more heavily defended positions. A basic idea is that guerrillas are not intended to drive Japanese out of their areas. On the contrary, it is their duty to absorb as many Japanese as possible. Guerrillas congratulate themselves not when the garrison of a Japanese-occupied city is reduced in size but when they have caused it to be increased. The more men they can contain within restricted zones, the fewer there will be for the Japanese to use elsewhere. The next step is to make the occupation as expensive economically for the Japanese as possible. This is done by organizing an economic blockade of the occupied zones. Trade between these zones and guerrilla territories is reduced to a minimum, and the export of all goods useful to the Japanese war machine is prohibited. That includes food and cotton. This policy forces the Japanese to bring in from Japan or other countries practically everything that their troops require.

Finally, the aim of guerrilla warfare is to limit the political influence of Japanese puppet regimes and to discourage Chinese from working for them. Needless to say, a very efficient espionage is maintained in the occupied zones. The movement by the Japanese of any body of men is known almost immediately at guerrilla headquarters. Chinese collaborationists find it dangerous to get out of sight of Japanese bayonets, and the fact that they cannot bring their new masters any political support lowers their bargaining power.

Strictly military activities are of the raiding or nuisance variety. If the garrison of a city is reduced by drawing off men for an

operation, an attack is made immediately. By striking simultaneously at many different places the guerrillas compel the Japanese to maintain their garrisons at full strength. If a garrison sets out in force to pacify the local countryside, guerrillas and peasants retire before it. But if only a small force is sent out it is attacked and probably disposed of to the last man. The guerrillas act on the theory that there is nowhere the Japanese cannot go if they are willing to use the necessary number of men and equipment, but that they cannot be everywhere at the same time.

These were the ideas which the simple-minded peasant had to understand if guerrilla warfare was to be successful. There was naturally a great deal of initial opposition. Villagers could not understand how they were contributing to the general campaign in picking up their belongings and retiring to the hills or to neighboring villages when the Japanese approached. This had to be explained to them, and they had to develop trust in the guerrilla armies. When the guerrillas destroyed a section of the railroad or derailed a train the Japanese would destroy the nearest village as a punitive measure. The guerrillas would be far away by daybreak, but the villagers who sheltered them and guided them across the fields had to take the punishment.

This sort of cooperation could never have been achieved if the people had not been the army—and the army, the people. Peasants can face suffering such as that inflicted upon them by the Japanese only when they are aiding troops who are their own brothers, their husbands, sons, or relatives. This does not mean that guerrilla warfare is a matter of being a farmer by day and a fighter by night. On the contrary, guerrilla units are on a full-time basis and have their own uniforms; they are rigorously trained and always ready for action. It is a matter of policy that they eat worse food and wear clothes of poorer cloth than the peasantry; they have no privileges setting them off from civilians, for they know that the civilian is an essential and immediate part of the army.

The movement spread to women as well as to men. Chinese women of the richer classes had achieved many rights and privileges during the preceding decades. They were in the schools and colleges, and some had entered the professions; coeducation was spreading, and with it changes in social customs which brought women much more into social life. Bound feet were a thing of the

past, marriage and divorce more and more on the western model. Women writers and even soldiers had taken part in the Nationalist Revolution. But most of these changes were limited to the cities; few had come to the villages. The women of the villages, however, took part with skill and enthusiasm in the organization of guerrilla warfare; it is doubtful whether it would have been possible without them, yet nothing could have been further from their usual experience. There was no lack of women's organizations to make uniforms, attend the wounded, and prepare the food. There were plenty of girls in uniform too.

The peasants provided everything except leadership. Without leaders the peasants would have been capable of nothing more dangerous than spontaneous, local revolt. Without such magnificent human material the leaders would have been nothing more than fugitives from the Japanese. Those leaders most skilled in the ways of the peasant and the appeals that stirred him to loyalty and enthusiasm were the small handful of men who for political or other reasons had had experience in the villages. To these were added the students and professors, the government officials and professional men who fled from the Japanese-occupied cities. Never before had most of them faced such problems, felt such a sense of dependence on their fellow countrymen, or lived under such physical conditions. These men faced a test in some ways greater than that of the peasants both from a personal and from an intellectual point of view.

Many of those who resisted started with little hope of success. They knew the strength of Japan and the military and economic weakness of China. They had taken too literally an idealistic picture of the United States—not entirely their own fault—and expected American help almost immediately. Surely the great and generous American people would not permit unjust aggression to go unchallenged? They were to be bitterly disillusioned. But those who survived found in their own people as in themselves a quality they had not expected. The strength of China and its future, they were to learn, lay in themselves and themselves alone.

What, then, can we expect of the future?

The fact that the American-minded Chinese no longer occupy the foreground in Chinese politics does not mean that all progress is dead. The army will always favor the development of modern

industry, for in order to be strong it must be mechanized. The weakness of the Chinese army today is not in its fighting spirit but in its inevitable association with agriculture and therefore with inefficiency and backward administration. It cannot draw upon any reservoir of men with knowledge of mechanics or natural science or even with an experience of the division of labor. No wonder, then, that the top ranks of the army are planning tremendous industrial development for the China of the future. The political climate will be determined more by the needs of the army than by the dreams of businessmen.

The change in emphasis means in practice that we have to deal with an almost entirely new group of men who are not American-minded. They are intensely nationalist, and their horizon includes not only the Pacific Ocean but also the continental, inner frontiers of China. They are the Chinese Chinese. Coming mainly from the army and the conservative branch of the Kuomintang they draw a good deal of their inspiration from Chinese tradition and view the western world critically.

The New Life Movement was an early groping towards the philosophy of their kind of China; the recent speeches and publications of Chiang Kai-shek continue the story. Their appeal is to tradition and nationalism, their task the establishment of national unity and the power of the state, beyond a shadow of a doubt. They will not be as imitative, capitalist, or liberal as the American-minded Chinese; they will move away from an unhealthy degree of adulation either of America or of the Soviet Union. But in their eagerness to rebuild and expand Chinese industry and increase the military power of the nation, they are likely to rely more and more on state planning and government control, not only because the springs of private initiative have dried up but also because they are impressed by the achievements of other countries using the same techniques. They will use western means for eastern ends.

No other group in China is strong enough to challenge this line of development. Sooner or later, whether through leadership and persuasion or through internal strife, the national mold will be uniformly set up. The age when China called in foreign political advisers to write her constitution and advise on fundamental questions of policy is gone for good. The Chinese will invite thousands of technical experts to assist in reconstruction, come to terms with

us on the loan of our capital resources and buy our products; but they will not listen as patiently as they did before to every foreigner who could not resist the temptation to pour forth the vials of his wisdom on the problems of China. If they are to have political nonsense, they will prefer their own to ours.

The first step in our adjustment to these changes is to give up our prewar approach to China as the big brother, advisory and patronizing, self-righteous and pompous. Curiously enough, now that we do not choose but are compelled to accept the Chinese on their own terms, the same characteristics, as if by magic, take on an entirely new aspect. What was quaint before is questionable now. The poverty which we gave money to relieve, at one time accepted as an act of God, is now laid to the Chinese government. The American-minded Chinese are now so obviously weaker in influence that we assume the government to be reactionary or even fascist. All this will change with experience, as will the difficulties which the Chinese have themselves in adjusting to the new situation. They are bound to act out of character, to seem affected, to discover that they understand us far less than they thought; they have to get accustomed to a new stratum of Americans.

Whoever provides the leadership in modern China, the main problems remain the same. They are big problems. How to improve the lot of the peasantry? How to develop modern industry? How to broaden the basis of national unity and set up the institutions of modern government in the villages as well as in the cities? These are problems big enough to daunt the bravest men, but the experience of Chiang Kai-shek in holding the Japanese invasion is living witness to his ability and vision, to say nothing of his courage. He is a man whose fierce sense of nationalism has been tested in the fires of war and who expects of others a willingness to sacrifice fully for that cause.

The appeal of nationalism is the lowest common denominator of Chinese political life. It is a sentiment based on the source of China's strength as well as her weakness—the land. It is compounded of love of home and farm, of self-respect and simple human dignity. It was whipped to white heat by the atrocities of the enemy, and fed by hope that out of victory could come the possibility of a free and united China.

We shall not have understood the Chinese if we have failed to

sense the character of a people who, in the course of a bitter struggle on their own soil which tested the qualities both of leaders and of the led, have weeded out the weak and the poor in spirit and found in that struggle the human basis for national unity.

GEORGE E. TAYLOR

May, 1944

THE PHOENIX AND
THE DWARFS

ACT ONE

SCENE I

TIME: *September, 1931.*

SCENE: *The main room of the home of Master Chou in a village of North China. Master Chou is the head man of the Village, and everything about the room indicates that position.*

DR exit to the kitchen and rear exit of the house; R small table and two chairs against the wall; UR exit to sleeping quarters; URC and ULC windows with carved casements. A pillar on each side of each window. Flower vase stands and flowers in vases before the windows. UC a k'ang—combination brick heating unit, resting place, and table. It is square with a rectangular raised place in the center that makes a table. Each side is wide enough to serve as a resting place for a person. The sides are covered with embroidered coverlets, and pillows are placed to permit rest. The center section contains pipes, tobacco, ginger, flowers. Above the k'ang on the wall UC is a painting of a Chinese landscape. UL a large bookcase with flowers in vase on it. UL exit to courtyard and the outside through carved double doors; RC a square table with three chairs about it.

LUNG enters DR and crosses DL. LUNG opens door DL and admits MEI-LAN. MEI-LAN is nervous and uncertain.

MEI-LAN

(Quickly)

Lung!

LUNG

Yes, Mistress Fan.

MEI-LAN

Tell Li-hsien I must see him right away.

(LUNG crosses UR)

No, Lung. Don't bother him. I'll wait till he's finished packing.

(LUNG starts DR)

He is packing, isn't he, Lung? Or has he finished? I don't want to hurry his last few minutes at home, yet I . . .

(LUNG goes R and waits patiently)

I . . . should talk to him now.

LUNG

(Calmly)

I'll tell the young master you're here, Mistress Fan.

MEI-LAN

Don't bother Li-hsien now, Lung. I . . .

(LUNG exits UR. SUN-PAO enters DR. SUN-PAO is excited)

SUN-PAO

(Not greeting MEI-LAN)

Where's Li-meng?

MEI-LAN

I don't know.

SUN-PAO

I'll go find him.

MEI-LAN

What's the matter?

SUN-PAO

You'll see soon enough.

(SUN-PAO dashes out UR. MEI-LAN crosses to bookcase UL.
LI-HSIEN enters UR and crosses to MEI-LAN)

LI-HSIEN

Mei-lan! I've been worried about you!

MEI-LAN

And now you're not?

LI-HSIEN

You're here. That can mean only one thing.

MEI-LAN

Can it?

LI-HSIEN

You said you'd go to the University with me. And you're here. That must prove your father finally agreed to your going.

MEI-LAN

But he didn't, Li-hsien.

LI-HSIEN

Even after I talked to him?

MEI-LAN

Even after you talked to him.

LI-HSIEN

But, Mei-lan, I . . . I . . . don't know what to say. It was always understood that we'd both go from the Village.

MEI-LAN

(*Wistfully*)

Master Fan never shared that understanding.

(*LUNG enters UR and waits R*)

LI-HSIEN

Our high-school teacher has arranged everything for us, Mei-lan. He'll be disappointed.

MEI-LAN

There's nothing more I can do.

LI-HSIEN

(*Noticing LUNG*)

Yes, Lung.

LUNG

Young Master Sun-Pao wishes you to do no more packing until he sees you.

(*Exits UR*)

LI-HSIEN

Sun-Pao has had many wild ideas. This must be the wildest.

MEI-LAN

Li-hsien!

LI-HSIEN

Yes, Mei-lan.

MEI-LAN

I couldn't survive seeing you go to the University without me.

LI-HSIEN

Could I talk to Master Fan again?

MEI-LAN

No. I'll say goodbye now.

LI-HSIEN

You've tried everything?

MEI-LAN

Everything.

(Abruptly)

Goodbye, Li-hsien.

LI-HSIEN

Next summer, when I come back to the Village, I'll persuade your father. I'll know so much more about everything that he'll never resist my arguments.

MEI-LAN

(Bitterly)

Next summer!

LI-HSIEN

This process of educating our parents is slow and painful.

MEI-LAN

It is, Li-hsien.

LI-HSIEN

If my father didn't think I was studying to be a rich official, he'd never let me go.

(SUN-PAO enters UR. SUN-PAO breaks into the conversation with simple, fanatical directness)

SUN-PAO

Talk to your brother, Li-hsien.

LI-HSIEN

About what?

SUN-PAO

About all of us joining General Ma in Manchuria.

LI-HSIEN

(Ignoring SUN-PAO)

Goodbye, Mei-lan.

MEI-LAN

Goodbye, Li-hsien.

LI-HSIEN

Next summer things'll be different.

MEI-LAN

(Bitterly)

Next summer.

(LI-HSIEN shakes MEI-LAN'S hand. LI-HSIEN starts UR. SUN-PAO stops LI-HSIEN)

SUN-PAO

My oldest brother is collecting volunteers by the Old Temple. We expect you and your brother to join us.

LI-HSIEN

(*As if SUN-PAO were a child*)

Poor Sun-Pao.

SUN-PAO

The Japanese are taking the whole of Manchuria.

LI-HSIEN

The League of Nations will handle the Japanese.

SUN-PAO

I don't care about the League of Nations. I want to fight now.

LI-HSIEN

(*Gently pushing SUN-PAO to one side*)

I still have my books to pack.

(*LI-HSIEN exits UR. MEI-LAN starts DL. SUN-PAO takes MEI-LAN by the arm to stop HER*)

SUN-PAO

Mei-lan. There's a place for you.

MEI-LAN

Please, Sun-Pao.

SUN-PAO

We'll need nurses for our wounded.

MEI-LAN

It's out of the question.

SUN-PAO

But the Japanese are taking away Chinese soil. If we all go and join General Ma and show the Japanese we mean business . . .

MEI-LAN

(*Paying no attention to* SUN-PAO)

My father'll not allow me to go to the University.

SUN-PAO

(*Contemptuously*)

University! What good is the University? We need fighters.

MEI-LAN

Don't talk to me about it.

SUN-PAO

You may fail China but I'm not going to.

MEI-LAN

Am I failing China?

SUN-PAO

You don't know what's going on in spite of all I've been telling you.

MEI-LAN

But I do know what's going on.

SUN-PAO

If you did, you'd fight right now without question.

MEI-LAN

But I don't believe in fighting.

SUN-PAO

You're hopeless. But you can do this for me. Persuade Li-meng to come with me. Li-meng would make a great fighter.

MEI-LAN

What Li-meng does is his concern.

SUN-PAO

What Li-meng does is our country's concern. There can't be individuals any more. Only people ready to die for China.

(LI-MENG enters UR. SUN-PAO speaks to LI-MENG without dropping a syllable)

Have you changed your mind?

LI-MENG

No, Sun-Pao.

SUN-PAO

Will you at least *come* to the Temple?

LI-MENG

No, Sun-Pao.

SUN-PAO

After what we've all been through.

LI-MENG

Each to his own decision.

SUN-PAO

You, Li-hsien, Mei-lan—all four of us grew up together. Our families paid a lot of money for us to go to the Provincial High School. We learned to know and love our country. And now when China needs us, Li-hsien hides his head in a desert of books like an ostrich. Mei-lan sits at home; and you . . .

LI-MENG

(*Quietly*)

What about me, Sun-Pao?

SUN-PAO

You'll be at the Temple tonight, so I won't answer that question.

MEI-LAN

With both you and your brother gone, your father will have difficulty farming his land.

SUN-PAO

I don't put anything before the need to defend our country.

LI-MENG

Each to his own decision.

SUN-PAO

There is no decision to make. You fight. That's all.

(SUN-PAO exits DL. MEI-LAN and LI-MENG watch the door through which he has passed)

MEI-LAN

Will Sun-Pao go?

LI-MENG

Yes.

MEI-LAN

Will he fight? I mean, really fight? Might he be killed?

LI-MENG

Sun-Pao will be killed.

MEI-LAN

Are you sure?

LI-MENG

Sun-Pao is a brave man and many brave men will be killed in Manchuria. They won't have much chance against the Japanese.

MEI-LAN

Is that why you won't go?

LI-MENG

I think . . . I hope . . . I'm not a coward, but I won't waste my life. I won't throw it away.

MEI-LAN

Is Sun-Pao throwing his life away?

LI-MENG

Yes. China has no equipment, no trained men, no military organization, no technique of supply. Only people. People alone are not enough.

(LUNG enters UR carrying three suitcases which he places by door DL)

MEI-LAN

Sun-Pao thinks they are.

LI-MENG

Sun-Pao is wrong.

MEI-LAN

What is to be done?

LI-MENG

I'll train myself. I'll learn to fight. I'll know what I'm doing. Then, if I die, I'll die being valuable, demanding a price.

(LUNG exits DR)

MEI-LAN

Next year, you're going to the University like Li-hsien.

LI-MENG

Perhaps.

MEI-LAN

What do you mean—perhaps?

LI-MENG

Can you keep a secret?

MEI-LAN

Of course.

LI-MENG

Tonight I . . . may leave for the National Military Academy. They've accepted me. I can go and learn to be a soldier and officer.

MEI-LAN

I didn't know this.

LI-MENG

No one does.

MEI-LAN

Not even Li-hsien?

LI-MENG

He wouldn't approve.

MEI-LAN

Your family?

LI-MENG

It would probably break their hearts.

MEI-LAN

But you're leaving?

LI-MENG

Are you going to the University?

MEI-LAN

I don't know.

LI-MENG

I love my grandmother, my father, my brother. Most of all Grandmother. And the Village. Must I be an outcast to fight for what I love?

(LUNG enters DR and exits UR)

MEI-LAN

Sun-Pao is sacrificing his father's land.

LI-MENG

And his own life.

MEI-LAN

It is a world of awful decisions.

LI-MENG

I want to follow Chiang Kai-shek.

MEI-LAN

When I close my eyes, I see children who've lived because I've brought cleanliness to their homes, who live because of vaccination and inoculations; men who are confident and happy with good crops and fair prices, and cooperative living. And over all, like many rainbows, is the feeling of education. Sometimes my heart pounds; and the blood pours through my veins and I'm not a person any more. I'm a force; a living, spreading, pounding force. Do you know what I mean, Li-meng?

LI-MENG

We've talked and thought and studied so much, Mei-lan. Perhaps it's time to trust our own feelings.

(MEI-LAN goes DL)

MEI-LAN

Each to his own decision, Li-meng.

LI-MENG

What are you going to do, Mei-lan?

MEI-LAN

When I close my eyes, I see a million faces. I feel very strong now.

(MEI-LAN exits DL. LI-MENG walks DL and looks after her)

(GRANDMOTHER assisted by LUNG enters UR and goes to K'ang.

After GRANDMOTHER is comfortably seated, LUNG exits DR.

GRANDMOTHER prepares and smokes a pipeful of tobacco. LI-

HSIEN enters DR)

LI-HSIEN

(Pleased and excited)

Do you realize that I'm going to the University today, Grandmother?

GRANDMOTHER

Of course I realize you're going to the University today.

LI-HSIEN

This is a very great moment in my life, Grandmother. The Chou Family has always boasted scholars, but I'm the first to attend a modern University. I'm going to study hard to be a leader.

GRANDMOTHER

Don't be so pompous, Li-hsien.

(LUNG enters DR)

LUNG

Venerable Grandmother . . .

GRANDMOTHER

Yes, Lung.

LUNG

Farmer Feng wishes to bring in some gifts from the Village.

(*Nodding to LI-HSIEN*)

They are for the Young Master.

LI-HSIEN

Ask Farmer Feng to bring in the gifts, Lung. I'll be glad to accept them.

(LUNG starts to exit DR)

GRANDMOTHER

Lung! Stay where you are. (*To LI-HSIEN*) Do you not respect your father, Li-hsien? Lung! Tell Master Chou of the gifts.

LUNG

Yes, venerable Grandmother.

(*Exits UR*)

LI-MENG

(*Turning from DL*)

Older Brother is liked in the Village. The Village honors and respects him.

GRANDMOTHER

The Village honors and respects the House of Chou.

(LUNG enters UR and stands by door. FATHER [MASTER CHOU] enters UR)

FATHER

I'm pleased that my oldest son is receiving honor from the Village.

GRANDMOTHER

Li-hsien is a good son.

FATHER

Lung! Have Farmer Feng bring the gifts to me here. We must realize that Li-hsien has brought honor to the House of Chou. Some day he'll be head of our family.

(To LUNG)

Tell Farmer Feng to come in.

(LUNG exits DR)

Li-meng!

LI-MENG

Yes, Father.

FATHER

Is it true that the second son of the Feng Family is also leaving home?

LI-MENG

Yes, Father. Sun-Pao is leaving his home.

FATHER

The Feng Family will lose face in the Village.

LI-MENG

Perhaps the sons of the Feng Family leave with their father's blessing.

FATHER

It is not so.

LI-MENG

Sun-Pao thinks he is right in going to Manchuria.

GRANDMOTHER

The Younger Brother has spoken enough for one day.

(LUNG enters DR with FARMER FENG. FENG carries two large baskets, bulging with watermelons, persimmons, and unplucked chickens. FARMER FENG puts down the baskets, clasps his hands in front of him, and bows up and down from the waist quickly many times. This is the Chinese manner of greeting. The FATHER barely returns the greeting. LUNG stands near baskets waiting for orders about their disposal)

FENG

Greetings, most worthy Master Chou.

FATHER

Greetings, Farmer Feng. What have you there?

FENG

The Village presents these worthless gifts to the Young Master. He will need food for the journey.

FATHER

My son is happy to accept the gifts, Farmer Feng.

FENG

They are worthless gifts for one so full of learning as the Young Master.

FATHER

Li-hsien. You may thank Farmer Feng.

LI-HSIEN

Thank you! Thank you!

FENG

I am most unworthy.

(FARMER FENG *makes no move to exit*)

FATHER

Have you something more to say?

FENG

The Feng Family is losing its river land.

FATHER

The Feng Family could not pay its taxes.

FENG

You're head man of the Village, most worthy Master Chou. Master Fan and even the Magistrate come to you for advice.

FATHER

The Magistrate administers the law. Master Fan collects the taxes. I interfere with neither.

FENG

If the Feng Family had more time to raise the tax money . . .

FATHER

This is not the place for such a discussion, Farmer Feng.

FENG

Thank you, most worthy Master Chou. Thank you for your great wisdom. Thank you, Young Master, for accepting the worthless gifts which I collected from the Village.

(FARMER FENG *exits DR bowing extravagantly as he retires. No one takes particular notice of FARMER FENG. He is not willfully ignored nor is his elaborate bowing acknowledged*)

FATHER

Lung! Take that rubbish into the kitchen.

(LUNG exits DR with baskets)

LI-MENG

Father! That's not rubbish. It's good food.

FATHER

The favor of the House of Chou cannot be bought by a few chickens.

LI-MENG

In my opinion—

GRANDMOTHER

No one asked your opinion, Li-meng.

LI-MENG

I'm sorry, Grandmother.

FATHER

(Shouting)

Lung! Bring in some tea.

LI-MENG

May I ask a question?

GRANDMOTHER

We are here to celebrate Li-hsien's departure for the University, not to answer your questions.

LI-MENG

It is the last.

FATHER

What is it, Li-meng?

LI-MENG

Is the Feng Family losing its land?

FATHER

It is possible, quite possible.

LI-MENG

In the Village, they say that Master Fan has made the taxes too high on the Feng Family land. No matter how hard the Feng Family works it can never pay them.

GRANDMOTHER

(Very annoyed)

That's enough, Li-meng.

LI-MENG

Yes, Grandmother.

FATHER

You're too young to understand such matters.

(Shouting)

Lung! Where's that tea?

(Finding an outlet for his annoyance)

The longer he stays with us, the lazier Lung gets.

(LUNG enters DR with tea. LUNG places the tea things on the table and pours tea into several cups. LUNG takes a cup over to GRANDMOTHER and then exits DR. LI-HSIEN has been in the background. FATHER turns to LI-HSIEN)

FATHER

Now, my son, you're leaving us.

(They all pick up cups of tea and drink casually. To varying degrees they all make the loud sucking noises that accompany Chinese eating and drinking)

LI-HSIEN

Yes, Father.

FATHER

I look forward to the day when you'll return to your family. You'll become a learned man and prosperous official—perhaps even a magistrate. The Chou Family will grow rich. Your younger brother will follow in your footsteps.

LI-MENG

Father.

FATHER

Yes, my son.

LI-MENG

Li-hsien'll be a fine scholar and a great official but I'm unworthy to follow in his footsteps.

FATHER

You're not quite so clever as Li-hsien. That's true.

GRANDMOTHER

But he may very well succeed.

LI-MENG

Li-hsien is so clever, Father, and he'll do so many things at the University that it'd bring no honor to the Family if I did not succeed as well.

GRANDMOTHER

What are you after, Li-meng?

LI-MENG

I wondered, Grandmother, whether Father'd be willing—

GRANDMOTHER

Address your father.

LI-MENG

Father I wish your permission to attend the National Military Academy.

FATHER

Why?

LI-MENG

I want to learn to be a soldier.

LI-HSIEN

This is Sun-Pao's idea.

LI-MENG

No, it's my own.

FATHER

I cannot give you my consent.

LI-MENG

I ask you again, Father.

FATHER

I have said no.

LI-MENG

But Chiang Kai-shek is calling for officers, Father. I want to fight in the Nationalist Army.

GRANDMOTHER

I never thought anyone in this family would want to become a bandit.

LI-MENG

Grandmother, I'm not going to be a bandit, I'm going to be a soldier.

FATHER

There is no difference between soldiers and bandits.

GRANDMOTHER

They come down to our villages and rob us. They take our last bowl of rice and our last roll of bedding. They burn our trees for fuel and get drunk on our wine.

FATHER

It's always been the same.

GRANDMOTHER

For sixty years I've seen these things.

FATHER

And your Chiang Kai-shek is the biggest bandit of them all.

GRANDMOTHER

Where do you get such ideas, Li-meng?

LI-MENG

I don't wish to be an undutiful son.

GRANDMOTHER

Yet you want to join these robbers. You want to disgrace the honored name of our family and roam the countryside, without a wife, without a name, without any sons to support you in your old age.

FATHER

Your brother's going to become an official and he will take care of us. If it were not for Li-hsien, your father and your grandmother would look forward to a bleak old age.

LI-MENG

I don't wish to be undutiful to my country either.

GRANDMOTHER

Have you no filial piety? If sons no longer obey their fathers, wives will soon be disobeying their husbands.

FATHER

No son of the Chou Family will be a bandit.

LI-MENG

But we've got to make our country strong, Father. The Japanese won't give us much time.

GRANDMOTHER

Keep to your books.

FATHER

You must learn to follow the example of your older brother.

LI-HSIEN

(Calmly but with assurance)

Father.

FATHER

You may speak, Li-hsien.

LI-HSIEN

The Younger Brother isn't entirely wrong, Father.

FATHER

I do not like this.

LI-HSIEN

Permit me to speak, Father.

GRANDMOTHER

There is too much independence in the young.

LI-HSIEN

I wish only to be an obedient and dutiful son.

GRANDMOTHER

You have contradicted your father, Li-hsien.

LI-HSIEN

I wished to explain.

GRANDMOTHER

Whatever it is you wish to do, you've contradicted your father.

LI-HSIEN

I'm sorry, Father.

FATHER

Continue, Li-hsien.

LI-HSIEN

Younger Brother is correct, Father. We must become a strong nation. But we need good government as well as a good army.

LI-MENG

First we need an army. A trained, equipped, disciplined army.

LI-HSIEN

If there is fighting to be done, there are millions of peasants and coolies to do it. It would be wasteful for educated men to fight and be killed.

FATHER

This talk explains nothing.

LI-HSIEN

I'll study these problems at the University, Father.

GRANDMOTHER

You would learn more at home.

LI-MENG

In the meantime, Japan slices off China bit by bit.

LI-HSIEN

Li-meng thinks he can remove our ills by fighting, Father, but he's brave and likes fighting. He dreams of sleeping by campfires and riding fine horses swiftly across the plains. But when he's studied

more about the conditions of our country, he'll see that he can do more for China by studying than by fighting. Strength comes from leadership. It comes from study and learning, not from bloodshed and destruction.

FATHER

You're right, my son.

LI-HSIEN

Thank you, Father.

GRANDMOTHER

I forbid further conversation on these subjects in my presence.

LI-HSIEN

Yes, Grandmother.

GRANDMOTHER

While you're away, Li-hsien, I'll look after your wife and care for your child.

LI-HSIEN

Thank you, Grandmother.

FATHER

I'll write down and send to you any messages the daughter-in-law might have.

(LI-MENG has withdrawn UL. MEI-LAN enters DL. TAI stands in doorway DL, cap in hand)

MEI-LAN

Good afternoon, Venerable Grandmother.

GRANDMOTHER

Good afternoon, Mei-lan.

(GRANDMOTHER and MEI-LAN exchange greetings Chinese-fashion)

MEI-LAN

Good afternoon, Master Chou.

FATHER

Good afternoon, Mei-lan.

(FATHER and MEI-LAN exchange greetings Chinese-fashion)

MEI-LAN

Shall Tai take your luggage to our cart? My father wishes the honor of carrying the luggage to the railroad.

LI-HSIEN

(Pointing DL)

It is ready.

(TAI picks up luggage DL and carries it out DL)

MEI-LAN

You look so gloomy.

LI-HSIEN

It is doubtful if I should leave at this time.

MEI-LAN

Not leave? What has happened, Li-hsien?

LI-HSIEN

A family matter. I should remain home until it is settled.

LI-MENG

(*Joining LI-HSIEN and MEI-LAN*)

Are you worrying about me, Older Brother?

LI-HSIEN

Yes.

LI-MENG

It was wrong of me to spoil your leaving.

LI-HSIEN

I'll stay and we'll talk. Then you'll feel differently.

LI-MENG

You must leave for the University.

FATHER

There is nothing in the family that I'll not be able to take care of.

LI-HSIEN

My Younger Brother will listen to the family counsel?

LI-MENG

I'll write you at the University, Li-hsien, and then you'll see that I've done the right thing.

GRANDMOTHER

There is too much talking in riddles.

FATHER

The Grandmother has spoken wisely. Li-hsien is willing but the time has not yet come for him to run the affairs of the House of Chou.

GRANDMOTHER

Lung! Lung!

LI-HSIEN

When I return from the University next summer, Li-meng, I'll know so much more. Wait until then for your decision.

(LUNG enters DR)

GRANDMOTHER

Call Li-hsien's wife.
(LUNG exits UR)

FATHER

When you get to the University, Li-hsien, study hard.

GRANDMOTHER

I hope you obey your teacher better than you do your father.

LI-HSIEN

I'll study very hard.

GRANDMOTHER

I expect no good to come of this.

(KU-LIEN enters UR with a three-months-old child in her arms. KU-LIEN is wearing simple Chinese clothes. Her manner is shy and quiet)

KU-LIEN

You called me, Grandmother?

GRANDMOTHER

Li-hsien. Will you say goodbye to your wife and child?

(LI-HSIEN crosses UR. LI-HSIEN bows in the Chinese manner to KU-LIEN. KU-LIEN returns the bow as best she can with a child in her arms)

LI-HSIEN

Goodbye, my wife.

(KU-LIEN glances at GRANDMOTHER who nods)

KU-LIEN

Goodbye, my husband.

LI-HSIEN

Take good care of my child.

KU-LIEN

Yes, my husband.

LI-HSIEN

Be a good daughter to your father-in-law. He'll write down any messages you wish to send me.

(LI-HSIEN and KU-LIEN exchange bows. KU-LIEN exits UR. FAN, the taxgatherer, huge, overdressed, and gracious, enters DL. He carries a much larger fan than the father's and manipulates it with even greater dexterity. FAN holds out a glass-encased tablet of stone bearing a carved inscription)

FAN

Ah! The Young Master.

LI-HSIEN

Master Fan. -

(There is an exchange of greetings in the Chinese manner)

FAN

(To FATHER)

Your unworthy friend has brought a small trifle for your most worthy son . . . a miserable gift . . . an inscribed tablet bearing an account of the honors that have befallen the Chou Family.

(FAN places the tablet on the table RC)

FATHER

You may thank Master Fan, Li-hsien.

LI-HSIEN

Thank you, Master Fan. A thousand thanks.

FAN

A wretched trifle.

(LI-HSIEN bows several times in Chinese fashion with strong expression of "ah")

GRANDMOTHER

It is time for Li-hsien to go.

(Calling)

Lung!

(GRANDMOTHER waits impatiently for LUNG. FATHER stands by doorway DL. FAN and MEI-LAN stare at each other)

LI-HSIEN

Mei-lan! I forgot. When you came in just now, does that mean . . .

MEI-LAN

There is hope, Li-hsien.

LI-MENG

(Pleased)

Mei-lan!

MASTER FAN

(Firmly)

While the Chou Family assembles in the courtyard, I'll be here with my daughter.

(LUNG appears DR and helps GRANDMOTHER out DL)

LI-HSIEN

Master Fan, if I may, I'd like to speak to you.

FATHER

Li-hsien will go to the cart.

LI-MENG

Mei-lan! Don't give up.

FATHER

Be still, Li-meng.

(FATHER, LI-MENG and LI-HSIEN exit *DL*. MEI-LAN faces FAN)

FAN

You put your suitcases in the cart.

MEI-LAN

I did, Father.

FAN

Does that mean you intend to go to the University?

MEI-LAN

Yes.

FAN

I've forbidden you to do so.

MEI-LAN

I'm going to the University, Father.

FAN

I'll disown you.

MEI-LAN

China won't disown me.

FAN

I'll send you no money.

MEI-LAN

I'll work my way. Other girls have.

FAN

Mei-lan! The Village knows I've forbidden you to leave. If you do now, I'll lose face in the Village.

(FAN is beginning to weaken)

MEI-LAN

I'm leaving, Father. Nothing will stop me. Will it be with your help, or must I go alone?

FAN

Don't go.

MEI-LAN

Goodbye, Father.

FAN

Why does this happen to the House of Fan? If only your grandmother were alive.

MEI-LAN

I have no choice, Father. I can't help myself. I must leave.

FAN

Then at least tell people that you go with my consent.

(SUN-PAO enters DR. SUN-PAO is more excited than ever)

SUN-PAO

Where's Li-meng?

MEI-LAN

In the courtyard. I'll send him in on my way to the cart.

SUN-PAO

Are you going to the University after all?

MEI-LAN

Yes.

SUN-PAO

Good! But I still think you ought to come to Manchuria as a nurse.

FAN

My daughter—a nurse? A common nurse?

- MEI-LAN

You should be pleased, Father, that I only want to go to the University.

(MEI-LAN and MASTER FAN exit DL. SUN-PAO watches them.
LI-MENG enters DL shortly)

SUN-PAO

Are you ready to go?

LI-MENG

No.

SUN-PAO

What's the matter? Are you afraid to fight?

LI-MENG

I'm not afraid.

SUN-PAO

Then come on.

LI-MENG

I can't do it.

SUN-PAO

What's the matter with you?

LI-MENG

I'm going to the National Military Academy.

SUN-PAO

You're what?

LI-MENG

I'm going to learn how to fight, Sun-Pao, and then I'll join you.

SUN-PAO

You're wrong, Li-meng. The Japanese won't wait until Chiang Kai-shek is ready.

LI-MENG

We've everything to learn about fighting. You in your way, I—in mine. We'll meet again.

SUN-PAO

I hope we'll serve together.

(SUN-PAO exits DR. LI-MENG crosses slowly DL. LI-MENG sees GRANDMOTHER approaching through the doorway DL)

LI-MENG

(Half to himself)

Grandmother's coming.

(LI-MENG hurriedly exits UR. GRANDMOTHER supported by LUNG enters DL)

GRANDMOTHER

Lung, I wish to go to my room. I do not like all this going away.

(LUNG helps GRANDMOTHER toward exit UR. GRANDMOTHER has bound feet. Even if she weren't aging, her walk would be slow and difficult)

Tell the Wife that I'll see her.

(GRANDMOTHER and LUNG exit UR. FATHER and FAN enter DL. FATHER sits down at table RC. FATHER is on 'U side of table facing audience. FAN sits on FATHER's left, his back to exit DL. FATHER and FAN have sat this way many times before and discussed various village matters)

FATHER

I didn't know, Master Fan, that you approved of girls going to Universities.

FAN

Yes, in some cases I do.

FATHER

Children are difficult these days.

FAN

Very difficult.

FATHER

I believe in a firm hand.

FAN

My daughter left with my consent.

FATHER

Four long years before Li-hsien graduates from the University.

FAN

But then he becomes a rich official.

FATHER

Lung! Lung!

FAN

At least you get your money back. Look at me. My daughter'll cost me a pretty penny before she finishes at the University. Then she'll get married, and what money I have left will go to her dowry.

(LUNG *appears UR*)

FATHER

Fresh tea, Lung.

(LUNG *exits DR*)

Why did you let her go?

FAN

It's too late now for me to wonder about what has happened.

(LUNG *enters DR and serves fresh tea*)

How are crops?

FATHER

Bad. It's pitiful to go through the fields.

(LUNG *exits DR*)

How are taxes?

FAN

Your unworthy friend will find it hard to bring them up to last year's amount.

(LI-MENG *enters DL. LI-MENG stands unnoticed by the doorway*)

FATHER

Too bad. Too bad. With your expenses so high now.

FAN

It's most fortunate you have the opportunity of buying the Feng Family land down by the river.

FATHER

Most fortunate.

FAN

(*Sighing*)

If the Feng Family can't pay taxes, the land must be sold.

FATHER

You don't think you put the taxes on the Feng Family up too high?

(*FAN and FATHER laugh*)

FAN

Until the taxes became too high, the Feng Family did *pay* them.

FATHER

Master Feng should have controlled his sons. Kept them at home, working in the fields.

FAN

I can scarcely have confidence in a man who can't command his own children.

FATHER

The Feng Family is losing influence.

FAN

They'll not have much to say now.

FATHER

It's true that you've lost about fifteen dollars a year.

FAN

Thirty dollars, Master Chou.

FATHER

I've always understood that the taxes on that land were fifteen dollars.

FAN

Thirty dollars is the new rate the Feng Family was unable to pay.

FATHER

Thirty dollars . . . mmmmmh . . . a substantial loss. Let's see, Master Fan. There's always a way.

(*Quickly*)

While the crops have been bad, the livestock has prospered. There

were over six hundred pigs born in the Village this year. At ten cents a pig . . .

FAN

Sixty dollars . . .

FATHER

Will the Magistrate approve?

FAN

For twenty-five percent. The Magistrate has the Provincial Judge to deal with.

FATHER

And my twenty-five percent.

FAN

That'll leave thirty dollars.

FATHER

The exact amount of your loss.

(FAN and FATHER laugh. LI-MENG rushes to the table RC and speaks with violent determination. LI-MENG has lost his previous self-control)

LI-MENG

Father!

FATHER

We've a guest in the house.

LI-MENG

You've got to listen to me.

FATHER

Later, my son.

LI-MENG

I'm leaving to enter the Military Academy.

FATHER

I forbid you to go.

LI-MENG

My duty to China comes before my obedience to you.

FATHER

I order you to remain in this house.

LI-MENG

Father, I'm not very old and I'm not very wise, but I know I must fight for my country.

FATHER

It's unreasonable.

LI-MENG

I wish to go with the family approval. I'd fight much better if I knew you and Grandmother wanted me to.

FATHER

There's nothing more to be said.

LI-MENG

But I must fight because it's the only way to save China.

FATHER

I've decided against that.

LI-MENG

You've no love for your country. All you care about is yourselves. What'll happen when you ask the peasants to fight for you? after you've taxed them to starvation, driven them off their lands, kept them in bondage?

FATHER

You're speaking in the presence of our guest, Master Fan.

LI-MENG

You and Master Fan both.

FATHER

(*Rising*)

These are not your thoughts, my son. You've learned such things from others.

LI-MENG

It's what I believe.

FATHER

You're an unfilial, disobedient, arrogant child full of talk and nonsense.

LI-MENG

Will you allow me to enter the Military Academy?

FATHER

No.

LI-MENG

I'm sorry, but I'll go anyway.

FATHER

If you go, you're no longer a member of the Chou Family.

(*LI-MENG is startled by the severe pronouncement*)

LI-MENG

I'm no longer . . . a . . . member of the Chou Family?

FATHER

That is my decree.

LI-MENG

But I learn to fight for you, Father.

FATHER

This is my decision.

LI-MENG

Our family—our house—Grandmother. I love all this. You mustn't exclude me from what I'm willing to die for.

(FATHER *does not weaken*)

If you'd only believe me and be trusting for just a little while, you'd see how right I am. (*No response*) I can't leave this way.

(FATHER, FAN and LI-MENG *stand quietly*)

I'm right and some day you'll tell me so.

(LI-MENG *slowly crosses DL. He turns at exit DL. He bows to FATHER in Chinese fashion*)

Goodbye, Father.

(FATHER *does not acknowledge farewell. LI-MENG speaks more loudly as if he thought FATHER hadn't heard him*)

Goodbye, Father.

(FATHER *makes no response. LI-MENG exits DL*)

FATHER

Master Fan will remember he has not been listening to the words of a member of the House of Chou.

FAN

Quite right. I would have done the same thing if I had been in your position.

CURTAIN

SCENE 2

TIME: June, 1936.

SCENE: *Setting is the same as SCENE 1.*

Teapots and teacups on table RC. Dishes of melon seeds and fruit. FATHER U of table RC facing audience. FAN is seated on FATHER'S left.

FAN

A day for celebration, Master Chou.

FATHER

Li-hsien returns home with many honors.

FAN

There'll be no limit on Li-hsien's future prosperity.

FATHER

After a period of retirement in the Village, my son will undoubtedly be called to the new Capital for important work.

FAN

Master Li-hsien has been worthy of the money you've invested in him.

FATHER

My son tells me that Mei-lan is also well thought of at the University.

FAN

But she's still unmarried. Always she'll be an expense. And now . . . these Health Centers . . . Soap, medicine, cooks.

(Sadly)

She even wants the peasants to learn reading and writing.

FATHER

What good would that do?

FAN

It would only bring us trouble. Already the peasants expect the Government to support their claims for lower taxes.

FATHER

Who brings such ideas to the peasants?

FAN

My daughter. My unworthy daughter.

FATHER

I've heard such gossip in the Village.

FAN

My daughter encourages the Government man in asking for my

tax records. I don't understand such an attitude. The tax records have been in the Fan Family for years. No one has ever seen them.

FATHER

There's no doubt about it. We should complete the arrangements for the marriage immediately. When she is concerned with the problems of a house and servants and sons . . .

FAN

I long for that day to come, Master Chou.

FATHER

Your daughter will see the Village differently.

FAN

The negotiator came to see me yesterday.

FATHER

(Not meaning it—more as a matter of form)

Of course, if you have in mind for your daughter some rich official far from the Village . . .

FAN

My daughter will not have anyone I suggest.

FATHER

You're agreed that Li-hsien is the only satisfactory prospect for your daughter.

FAN

I agree. My daughter will be a second wife but it is all I can do.

FATHER

In my case, it is the same. My son hasn't yet had a male heir. This worthless wife of his produces nothing but females. I'm not anxious for him to have a second wife, but there is nothing else to do.

FAN

A disturbing situation.

FATHER

My son is hard to please.

FAN

Of course, if you have in mind for him some girl from a larger and more distant village . . .

FATHER

Only Mei-lan will please my son as a wife.

FAN

My unworthy daughter will marry the learned son of the House of Chou.

FATHER

My son shall take a second wife and she shall be your daughter.

FAN

Since Li-hsien is returning today, we should choose a time for the marriage.

FATHER

I've heard that a soothsayer's in the Village today.

FAN

He might select a time.

FATHER

What if Li-hsien returns in our absence? I'm most anxious that our children know of our plans at once and at the same time.

FAN

Mei-lan is in the courtyard.

FATHER

Ask her to welcome Li-hsien when he comes and to wait our return from the Village.

FAN

Agreed.

FATHER

Lung! Lung!

FAN

Our families have long been friends.

FATHER

And we've prospered together.

(LUNG enters DR)

FAN

Tell my daughter that her father wishes to see her.

(LUNG exits DL)

FATHER

How fitting it is that the relations of our family become more intimate.

FAN

Farmer Mei is having trouble paying his taxes.

FATHER

His land lies next to our river property.

(MEI-LAN enters DL)

FAN

Master Chou and I are going to the Village. When we return, we'll have important news for you.

FATHER

If Li-hsien should arrive in our absence, will you present our apologies and tell him we'll return shortly?

MEI-LAN

I'll be glad to welcome Li-hsien.

(FATHER and FAN say goodbye to MEI-LAN in the Chinese manner. FATHER and FAN exit DL. MEI-LAN sits down quietly on the k'ang. LUNG enters DL and exits DR. MEI-LAN relaxes. LI-MENG enters DR in Chinese uniform. HE carries a rucksack. His left arm is bandaged and in a sling. The bandage and sling are dirty. LI-MENG is pale and tired. There is a burning, driving quality about him, though, that gives him strength and courage. MEI-LAN sees him and, for a moment, is startled. With a quick cry of welcome, MEI-LAN crosses DR and takes his right hand)

Li-meng! It's you.

LI-MENG

Yes, Mei-lan.

(Covering up his emotion at seeing MEI-LAN)

How is my family?

MEI-LAN

Your father is well, and he has prospered. Your brother returns from the University today.

LI-MENG

I'll see him then.

(Quietly)

How's Grandmother?

MEI-LAN

Your grandmother is not very strong any more.

LI-MENG

I can't think of Grandmother not being very strong.

MEI-LAN

When Master Chou isn't around, she often talks of you. I've shown her your letters. She'll never get over the hurt of your going.

LI-MENG

Lung hasn't changed.

MEI-LAN

Nothing will ever change Lung. He's eternal.

(Aware of the bandage)

What a horrible, dirty dressing!

(*Calling*)

Lung! Lung!

(*To LI-MENG*)

It's a wonder infection hasn't set in—or has it?

(*Crossing DL*)

I'll get my medical kit.

(*LUNG appears DR*)

Bring me a bowl of hot water, Lung!

(*LUNG exits DR. MEI-LAN exits DL. LI-MENG walks about the room, once more getting the feel of the house. LI-MENG has often thought of his home in the last five years. MEI-LAN enters DL with medical kit. As MEI-LAN and LI-MENG talk, MEI-LAN expertly removes the dirty bandages, dresses the wound, and re-bandages the arm*)

MEI-LAN

I've read your letters a thousand times.

LI-MENG

I'm glad. I read yours ten thousand times.

MEI-LAN

But you didn't leave the Military Academy and come to the University. Instead you always seemed to be fighting somewhere.

LI-MENG

That's true.

MEI-LAN

You might've been killed.

LI-MENG

I was lucky.

(*LUNG enters DR with a large bowl of hot water. LUNG places bowl on table R. LUNG exits DR*)

MEI-LAN

You must be careful of this wound. The dressing was not well put on in the first place and it's not been changed for weeks.

LI-MENG

It's been a long way getting home.

MEI-LAN

All this fighting when you should've been studying.

LI-MENG

Sun-Pao asked you to study nursing once. And now you have.

MEI-LAN

I've studied nursing but not for the reason you had in mind. I work for the villagers, not for the soldiers.

LI-MENG

It suits you to do what you want. You're very beautiful, Mei-lan.

MEI-LAN

It's good to be with you again.

LI-MENG

I'm happy here.

MEI-LAN

Don't go back to fighting. Stay here. Rest up and be well again. If you leave the Nationalist Army, Grandmother will see to it that your father takes you back into the family again. He suffered terribly when you left. So did your grandmother.

LI-MENG

I know how they felt.

MEI-LAN

If you'd only come with Li-hsien and me!

LI-MENG

I've thought of that many times.

MEI-LAN

I'm doing so much. Six months of study and then six months of field work. I learn what I should do and then the University sends me out to see if I can do it . . .

(Proudly)

And I can.

LI-MENG

Study nursing, Mei-lan. Learn all you can of medicine.

MEI-LAN

That's only part of our rural reconstruction program.

LI-MENG

Before long, nursing will be all that's left for you to do. There'll be no rural reconstruction program.

MEI-LAN

When you see what I've done . . .

LI-MENG

You must understand the message I bring to you and my family.

MEI-LAN

You will stay then and rest?

LI-MENG

Would that please you, Mei-lan?

MEI-LAN

It would please me very much.

LI-MENG

(Sarcastically)

I'll stay home, renounce Chiang Kai-shek, become a rich official, have my father negotiate a marriage with your father, and raise a family of seven sons.

MEI-LAN

There's nothing wrong with some of that.

LI-MENG

Time is short.

MEI-LAN

You said that the day I left for the University.

LI-MENG

I've had my six months of field work—just as you have. Six months of mud, snow, cold; of watching men, women, and children die; of learning the awful business of killing.

MEI-LAN

(Pointing to bandage)

And that's all you have to show for it.

LI-MENG

I have knowledge and skill in fighting.

MEI-LAN

You know how to destroy.

LI-MENG

I'll have a division to command when I get back.

MEI-LAN

But just fighting! What a waste when that's all you know!

LI-MENG

(Rushing on)

Chiang Kai-shek has built up a modern army. Our men will go into the remote provinces, into distant and forgotten places, and we'll build a people's army. We're all part of a country that's awakening and uniting. It's a new world and I'm living in it, helping to create it . . . and the dwarfs will never conquer it.

(LI-HSIEN enters DL. LI-HSIEN wears occidental dress. His manner is confident. He feels himself to be in command of any

situation. LI-HSIEN, though, has a genuine regard and respect for LI-MENG)

LI-HSIEN

Hello, Mei-lan.

MEI-LAN

Hello, Li-hsien.

LI-HSIEN

(Happily)

Li-meng!

LI-MENG

Greetings, Li-hsien.

LI-HSIEN

Are you badly hurt?

LI-MENG

The wound will heal.

LI-HSIEN

Have you seen Grandmother, Father . . .

LI-MENG

I came in through the side gate. Lung knows I'm here, but I've seen no one else.

LI-HSIEN

It is well that we both arrive home at the same time.

(Briskly)

Here's the way I'll handle it. You made a mistake. Now you're humble and repentant. I know I can persuade Father to forgive you, because in his heart he wants to.

LI-MENG

I didn't come to be forgiven. I came to tell you that I have graduated from the Military Academy. Chiang Kai-shek himself gave us our diplomas.

LI-HSIEN

You're wasting your time, Li-meng; there are so many other things to do.

LI-MENG

I have no quarrel with your kind of patriotism, Li-hsien. We have got to have good government but we can't have it without a modern army. Either we rely on our own strength or—

MEI-LAN

Or what?

LI-MENG

We become slaves of the Japanese.

LI-HSIEN

That's where you're wrong.

MEI-LAN

At the University, we've learned that we must develop through better farming, sounder health programs, education . . .

LI-HSIEN

More than that, Mei-lan. Diplomacy is our weapon. I'm going to be a diplomat. England and America are our friends. They'll protect us and help us. With them on our side we're safe. And with their protection China can develop internally as a nation.

LI-MENG

The dwarfs have invaded China and we have only ourselves to stop them. That is what I've learned. And that is what I say now.

MEI-LAN

Li-meng, please! You must think of making peace with your family.

LI-HSIEN

Yes, Li-meng. You must never leave us again.

MEI-LAN

Li-meng should clean up, put on his uniform, and look impressive.

LI-HSIEN

He is still a soldier as far as Father is concerned.

MEI-LAN

But he's an officer. Aren't you, Li-meng?

LI-MENG

A captain. I get paid regularly. And my uniform is of good cloth. Perhaps Father will be impressed.

LI-HSIEN

I'll tell Father you're about to become a great official.

LI-MENG

At least, Li-hsien, *you'll* accept me as a soldier.

LI-HSIEN

I want you home. We'll have long talks. Then you may realize how right I am—and Mei-lan.

MEI-LAN

Just control yourself, Li-meng, and we'll get you back where you belong.

LI-HSIEN

(Hears FAN and FATHER approaching)

Father's coming. Quick, Li-meng. Clean up. Look well! And hold your tongue.

MEI-LAN

You mustn't quarrel with your family ever again.

(LI-MENG exits UR with rucksack. FATHER and MASTER FAN enter DL)

LI-HSIEN

Your unworthy son pays his respects.

FATHER

You've brought great honor to the family.

LI-HSIEN

Greetings, Master Fan.

FAN

Welcome to the Village, Young Master Chou.

LI-HSIEN

I've many messages and letters from the University for you, Mei-lan.

(LUNG assists GRANDMOTHER in UR. GRANDMOTHER has aged and she needs LUNG's support. GRANDMOTHER takes her place on the k'ang UC and smokes her pipe. LUNG exits DR)

LI-HSIEN

Greetings, Venerable Grandmother.

GRANDMOTHER

It's about time you came home and settled down.

(KU-LIEN enters UR. LI-HSIEN greets her Chinese-fashion. KU-LIEN returns the greeting)

LI-HSIEN

How is our first child?

KU-LIEN

Well, my husband.

LI-HSIEN

How is our second child?

KU-LIEN

Well, my husband.

(KU-LIEN stands by GRANDMOTHER)

LI-HSIEN

I've splendid news for all of you. I've won a Boxer Indemnity Fellowship.

MEI-LAN

(*Running to LI-HSIEN*)

That's wonderful.

FATHER

What is this new honor?

LI-HSIEN

I'll be permitted to attend an American University with all my expenses paid.

MEI-LAN

The Boxer Indemnity Fellowships are the highest honor a student can receive.

FATHER

I am pleased.

GRANDMOTHER

Why should anyone want to go to America?

LI-HSIEN

You have to study abroad these days to become a really great diplomat.

FATHER

How long will you be gone?

LI-HSIEN

Three years, usually.

GRANDMOTHER

Who would look after you?

FATHER

Are you certain these Americans are civilized?

GRANDMOTHER

You might get killed by bandits.

LI-HSIEN

I'll learn in America what must be done to help China.

GRANDMOTHER

I don't like all this talk of *helping* China.

FATHER

How long is the history of America?

LI-HSIEN

China has a magnificent past, Father. But we have got to fit China

into the modern world. America is the place where the young men of China can learn the secrets of good government and international diplomacy.

MEI-LAN

Everyone wants to go to America.

GRANDMOTHER

I've never seen such restlessness.

LI-HSIEN

Do I have your permission, Father?

FATHER

This diplomat you speak of becoming: is he a great official?

LI-HSIEN

The diplomats are the most important officials in all China.

GRANDMOTHER

Why can't people stay in one place and have children?

FATHER

Yes, Li-hsien. You do not yet have a son.

LI-HSIEN

May I go to America, Father? I must know your decision immediately.

FATHER

Why are you in such a hurry?

LI-HSIEN

I must leave in less than a month.

FATHER

Less than a month? Master Fan, perhaps now would be the best time to announce our plans.

FAN

Most certainly, Master Chou.

FATHER

The soothsayer spoke wisely. It proves how well he knew.

FAN

Mei-lan, will you walk in the courtyard with me?

MEI-LAN

Why . . . yes, Father.

(FAN and MEI-LAN exit DL)

FATHER

Will Grandmother ask the daughter-in-law to take care of the children?

GRANDMOTHER

Perhaps the children need you, Ku-lien.

(KU-LIEN *exits DR*)

FATHER

If you're leaving for America in less than a month, the sooner you take a second wife the better.

LI-HSIEN

You haven't told me about this, Father.

FATHER

You know that it's long been a source of worry to Grandmother and me that your wife hasn't given birth to a male child. If I approve your going to America, and I think I must, then you'll have to take a second wife to make certain of continuing the line.

LI-HSIEN

That's called bigamy, Father.

GRANDMOTHER

What's that?

LI-HSIEN

It's wrong for a man to have two wives.

GRANDMOTHER

Nonsense. Your mother was a second wife.

FATHER

Master Fan is in complete accord.

LI-HSIEN

Then it's Mei-lan that you've in mind for me.

GRANDMOTHER

Yes.

FATHER

Everything's been arranged.

GRANDMOTHER

I believe it'll be a very good match.

FATHER

You and Mei-lan are often seen together here and at the University.

LI-HSIEN

I would have to divorce Ku-lien. Do you realize that?

GRANDMOTHER

There'll be no divorce in this family.

FATHER

That would be unthinkable.

LI-HSIEN

I can't blindly accept your plans for me, Father. If I marry Mei-lan, it must be because it's the right thing for me to do and not because you've ordered it.

FATHER

It's enough that I've ordered it.

LI-HSIEN

Marrying Mei-lan would be logical in some ways. I'll have enough money to take Mei-lan to America with me. She'd like to continue her studies at an important American University. It's unlikely that she'd ever get such an opportunity except through me.

GRANDMOTHER

It is better for the wife to stay at home.

LI-HSIEN

When a wife stays at home, she doesn't learn and she becomes a hindrance to a man's career. Many students at the University divorced their old-fashioned wives and married girls with the same educational and intellectual interests that they have.

FATHER

Do not speak again of divorce.

LI-HSIEN

On the other hand, I've known students who kept their old-fashioned wives and found this no impediment to their careers.

FATHER

If you have no sons, the House of Chou will die out.

LI-HSIEN

I suppose that when an old country like this modernizes itself, there are bound to be many, many conflicts like this.

GRANDMOTHER

Talk! Talk! Talk!

LI-HSIEN

I can't divorce my first wife. I can't have two wives. And I don't want to go against your wishes, Father.

(As if it had just occurred to him)

I'll see what Mei-lan thinks.

FATHER

The soothsayer chose tonight as the best time for the wedding.

GRANDMOTHER

A good choice.

FATHER

I'll tell Lung what to arrange for the wedding feast.

GRANDMOTHER

Ku-lien and I shall make preparations for the second wife.

(FATHER *exits DR*)

LI-HSIEN

I must have time to think this out.

GRANDMOTHER

You may think all you wish, but the decision has been made. Lung!
Lung!

LI-HSIEN

I can do this only if I think it right.

GRANDMOTHER

Would you like to be married to Mei-lan?

LI-HSIEN

Yes.

GRANDMOTHER

Isn't that what you're talking about all the time? In your new China, people do things only because they want to.

LI-HSIEN

They do what they believe in.

GRANDMOTHER

You believe that you'd like to marry Mei-lan?

LI-HSIEN

I know I would.

GRANDMOTHER

Your father wishes it.

LI-HSIEN

True.

GRANDMOTHER

I wish it. There's nothing more to be said by anyone.

(LUNG *enters DR*)

Take me to my room.

(LUNG *helps* GRANDMOTHER *UR*)

Tell the daughter-in-law to come to me. We have work to do.

(LUNG *and* GRANDMOTHER *exit UR*. FATHER *enters DR*)

FATHER

Lung! Lung!

(*Looking closely at* LI-HSIEN)

You're the only son in the House of Chou. Our line must not die out.

(FATHER exits DR. LI-HSIEN paces the floor. LUNG enters UR and exits DR. MASTER FAN enters DL. MASTER FAN is agitated)

FAN

Where is Master Chou?

LI-HSIEN

In the kitchen.

FAN

Selecting food for the wedding feast. Is that right, Young Master?

LI-HSIEN

Yes. (FAN exits DR. MEI-LAN enters DL, embarrassed and trying to act unconcerned) Won't you sit down, Mei-lan?

(LI-HSIEN holds a chair at table RC)

MEI-LAN

Has your father spoken to you, Li-hsien?

LI-HSIEN

He has.

MEI-LAN

What did you say to him?

LI-HSIEN

I asked for time to think it over.

MEI-LAN

That was my feeling, too.

LI-HSIEN

These decisions are hard to make. I respect my father and his wishes. You've longed to go to America. As my wife, you'd have that wish realized. I've always been very fond of you, Mei-lan. We have the same interests and beliefs. In the eyes of the Village a second wife is perfectly legal. Ku-lien will accept such a custom. Of course, you'd be very helpful to my career as a diplomat. We belong partly to the old and partly to the new. If we're completely practical about it, I think our marriage would be quite logical.

MEI-LAN

This is all so confusing.

(LI-MENG enters UR. He wears a captain's uniform of the Chinese Nationalist Army. LI-MENG looks well in his uniform. Being home again has given his spirits a lift)

LI-MENG

I've talked with Grandmother. She's wonderful.

(MEI-LAN and LI-HSIEN do not reply)

And Ku-lien. I think Ku-lien has come to be very attractive.

(*Laughing*)

I've even seen the children, Li-hsien.

(*No response from MEI-LAN and LI-HSIEN*)

What's wrong?

LI-HSIEN

I—er— Didn't Grandmother tell you?

LI-MENG

No.

MEI-LAN

Master Fan and your father have arranged a marriage between me and your brother.

LI-MENG

That's very funny.

LI-HSIEN

What's so amusing about it?

LI-MENG

Such a marriage is out of the question.

LI-HSIEN

Not completely.

LI-MENG

What do you think of this, Mei-lan?

MEI-LAN

It's all so curious . . . so confusing.

LI-MENG

Mei-lan, listen to me. We have to make up our own minds. No one can do it for us.

MEI-LAN

I believe that.

LI-MENG

I've returned to ask you to marry me, Mei-lan.

LI-HSIEN

By what right?

LI-MENG

I love Mei-lan and I wish her to become my wife.

LI-HSIEN

You're nothing but a soldier.

LI-MENG

You have a wife. Mei-lan deserves more than the status of a second wife.

LI-HSIEN

I'll divorce Ku-lien.

LI-MENG

That would be wrong.

LI-HSIEN

This is my decision. Mei-lan, will you have me?

MEI-LAN

No, Li-hsien. All this belongs to the past and we belong to the future. When I think of marriage, I see the faces of the people I must help, appealing to me. No, Li-hsien, I belong to the things I have to do, and you feel the same way.

(*Gently*)

You don't really want to marry me.

LI-HSIEN

Mei-lan!

LI-MENG

Mei-lan is right, Li-hsien. Marry me, Mei-lan. I believe in China and its future. We could share in building what we know and love.

MEI-LAN

You're a soldier, Li-meng. I do not believe in killing.

LI-MENG

We must fight to defend ourselves.

MEI-LAN

There's nothing more to say. I have my work to do. Family, friendships, love—nothing can keep me from that work.

(*FAN enters DR*)

FAN

I heard my daughter's voice.

(*FATHER enters DR. FATHER sees LI-MENG and immediately freezes*)

FATHER

Leave this house.

LI-HSIEN

Li-meng is injured and he needs a place to rest and recover from his wound.

FATHER

He does not belong to the House of Chou.

LI-HSIEN

Li-meng is a captain in the Army. He gets paid. His uniform is of good material. He will be a great official.

FATHER

Be still, Li-hsien.

LI-MENG

I believe in Chiang Kai-shek, Father. We must all unite under him to fight the Japanese.

FATHER

I refuse to talk to bandits.

LI-MENG

I've asked Mei-lan to be my wife.

FATHER

There is no end to the trouble you cause the House of Chou. Get out!

LI-HSIEN

I do not agree with my brother but I ask that you allow him to stay.

FATHER

(*Pointing his fan to* LI-MENG)

Get out!

LI-MENG

Mei-lan.

MEI-LAN

It's better for you to go, Li-meng.

LI-MENG

Li-hsien.

FATHER

Do not speak to him, Li-hsien.

LI-MENG

Li-hsien!

(*LI-HSIEN is silent. LI-MENG looks around the room*)

I leave sadly and with a heavy heart.

(*LI-MENG exits UR*)

FAN

My daughter! Now that Li-meng is leaving, will you change your mind?

MEI-LAN

There will be no marriage.

(*Exits UR*)

FAN

My daughter is not obedient to her father's wishes.

(*FAN bows and exits DL*)

LI-HSIEN

Mei-lan is angry.

FATHER

Li-meng caused all this.

LI-HSIEN

Mei-lan is angry with me.

(*LI-MENG enters UR with his rucksack*)

LI-MENG

Goodbye.

LI-HSIEN

Li-meng.

FATHER

Be still, Li-hsien.

LI-HSIEN

I speak to my brother.

(*Taking LI-MENG'S hand*)

Goodbye, Li-meng. I'll be leaving for America soon. When I return, we'll meet again and talk.

LI-MENG

Goodbye, Li-hsien.

(*To FATHER*).

Goodbye, Father.

(*LI-MENG exits DL*)

FATHER

The Mei-lan matter is of small importance. The negotiator on behalf of the Wang Family has been visiting me. Arrangements could be rapidly concluded.

LI-HSIEN

What?

FATHER

Although you haven't met the second daughter of the Wang Family, I think you'll like her. She's been to high school and is very skilled in needlework.

LI-HSIEN

I'm sorry, Father, but any further talk of marriage is out of the question.

FATHER

My son, you too are becoming undutiful and disobedient.

(GRANDMOTHER enters *UR supported by* KU-LIEN. GRANDMOTHER goes to *k'ang*)

LI-HSIEN

I must think of America, of what I can learn, of what I can do for China.

GRANDMOTHER

I gather that we'll have no wedding banquet tonight.

FATHER

Li-hsien refuses to consider the second daughter of the Wang Family.

GRANDMOTHER

There has been enough talk of marriage and the future of China.

LI-HSIEN

Yes, Grandmother.

GRANDMOTHER

Allow Li-hsien to complete his learning. He will come home again. Then we shall see. He will be wiser.

FATHER

The negotiator has only one more visit to make to the Wang Family.

GRANDMOTHER

There is a first wife in our family still, Master Chou. I do not find the second daughter of the Wang Family her superior.

LI-HSIEN

Thank you, Grandmother.

FATHER

The Chou Family will lose face in the Village.

GRANDMOTHER

The Chou Family has lost one son. A good, brave, handsome son. I do not wish to see us lose another.

FATHER

Grandmother! I have made a decision.

GRANDMOTHER

(Preparing a pipe of tobacco)

Where do the young get their strength, Master Chou? It is a terrible and strange strength. It is my decision that we should not always deny it.

(Loudly)

Lung! Lung!

(To LI-HSIEN)

Older Brother, where do the young get this strength? What is happening in places away from the Village that youth should be so restless?

(LUNG enters DR)

Tea, Lung.

(LUNG exits DR)

LI-HSIEN

Grandmother, we can't go on the way we've always gone. The world is leaving us behind. We have to have strong government and strong diplomacy. We can't wait for the peasants to catch up with us. We have to take our place in the world and get equality. You see, Grandmother, the nations are joined together now to stop aggression. They call it a League of Nations. With the protection of the League we can make our country strong and teach our people how to be modern. You don't know how bright the future is! Grandmother, you're not listening.

GRANDMOTHER

Li-meng looked handsome in his uniform, didn't he?

C U R T A I N

ACT TWO

SCENE I

SCENE: *May, 1938.*

GRANDMOTHER *is seated on bed UC, smoking her pipe.* KU-LIEN *sits at table R. KU-LIEN is embroidering.*

KU-LIEN

We have waited a long time.

GRANDMOTHER

A very long time.

KU-LIEN

Two years ago Li-hsien left for America. It is eleven months since the Japanese dwarfs invaded our land. Three months have passed since Li-hsien wrote that he would be back home with us.

GRANDMOTHER

(Gently)

It was a happy day when our house was blessed with a male child.

(Tenderly)

You've been a good wife, Ku-lien.

KU-LIEN

Perhaps Li-hsien should have stayed in America until he finished his learning, Venerable Grandmother.

GRANDMOTHER

Li-hsien already has more education than he can hold. It is high time he came home and settled down.

KU-LIEN

How strange that Mei-lan remains unmarried!

GRANDMOTHER

It is unnatural.

KU-LIEN

I wish Li-hsien would come home. The second son of the Feng Family has seen the Japanese in Peking. He says you can move around quite freely and you can travel on the railroads. It'll be easy for Li-hsien to reach here. We're so close to the railroad.

GRANDMOTHER

Li-hsien will get here somehow.

KU-LIEN

Do you think he loves Mei-lan, Venerable Grandmother?

GRANDMOTHER

Have the women down at the stream been talking?

KU-LIEN

Yes, Venerable Grandmother.

GRANDMOTHER

It is well that Li-hsien returns.

KU-LIEN

Li-hsien will show us how to handle the Japanese. He'll be such a famous scholar that he'll know what to do.

(MEI-LAN enters DL)

MEI-LAN

Good morning, Grandmother. Good morning, Ku-lien.

GRANDMOTHER

Sit down, Mei-lan.

(MEI-LAN sits beside GRANDMOTHER on the k'ang UC)

What news do you bring, Mei-lan?

(KU-LIEN sits down R)

MEI-LAN

The news is not good, Grandmother. Last night a bridge was blown up on the railroad and the Japanese are angry. The Japanese say that our guerrillas are hiding in the villages around here and there'll be punishment, both for hiding the guerrillas and for the blowing up of the bridge.

GRANDMOTHER

We're peaceful people here in the Village.

MEI-LAN

It is said that the Japanese will shoot the head man of the Village.

GRANDMOTHER

We've not given any offense to them.

MEI-LAN

Even so, many people think that Master Chou's life is in danger.

GRANDMOTHER

Nonsense, Mei-lan.

MEI-LAN

I still think you ought to get Master Chou out of the Village as soon as possible.

GRANDMOTHER

Master Chou has had nothing to do with blowing up the railroad. We can prove that he's never been out of the Village.

KU-LIEN

My husband will be coming back to his family and I'm sure he'll handle the situation.

MEI-LAN

But even if Li-hsien could handle it, he may not be in time. It would be wiser for Master Chou to get away.

(LUNG enters DR and serves the tea)

GRANDMOTHER

Lung, have you heard anything in the Village about the Japanese coming?

LUNG

I've heard that they are looking for guerrillas, Venerable Grandmother.

GRANDMOTHER

I don't believe it. Who said so?

LUNG

Mei-lan told me.

GRANDMOTHER

Is this true, Mei-lan?

MEI-LAN

I've heard it very indirectly, Grandmother.

GRANDMOTHER

Go to the Village, Lung, and see if there is any more gossip.

(LUNG exits DL)

KU-LIEN

If Li-hsien were only here, he could explain everything.

GRANDMOTHER

There is nothing but excitement these days.

MEI-LAN

I'm worried because I can't travel safely to supervise my Clinics.

(FATHER and FAN enter DR. They are very excited)

FATHER

Grandmother, we must ask you to retire to your room. Take the wife with you.

GRANDMOTHER

Why can't you leave an old woman in peace?

FATHER

We have important matters to discuss.

GRANDMOTHER

It's not like you, my son, to be so excited.

FATHER

We've had this situation before, so don't worry.

(FATHER *helps* GRANDMOTHER *out* UR. KU-LIEN *follows them out* UR)

FAN

Mei-lan, you'd better get back to our house.

MEI-LAN

I'm quite happy here, Father, and I know exactly what you're going to talk about.

FAN

We have merely some business matters to discuss.

(FATHER *enters* UR)

MEI-LAN

Merely a matter of the Japanese coming to shoot Master Chou.

FAN

As you know so much you had better stay.

FATHER

They say these Japanese are expensive.

FAN

While this is the first time that they've come to the Village, it will not be the last. You remember how the bandits used to come in the spring and squeeze us as dry as they could? But there was always something more to squeeze in the fall.

FATHER

Well, how much can you give if it's me they want?

FAN

Times are not so good as they used to be, Master Chou. My daughter is still a great expense to me. I even support some of her clinics. It is a great drain on my resources. How much will they want?

FATHER

Some think it will be as high as five hundred dollars.

FAN

One hundred dollars is as much as I can possibly raise.

FATHER

It would be very awkward if they discovered that you are the tax-

gatherer. Very awkward, perhaps. I would naturally do everything within my power to keep the knowledge from them.

(Bath men are perspiring freely—FAN loosens his collar and mops his forehead with his wide sleeve)

FAN

There must be some way out of this.

FATHER

Of course, for your sake I might be able to find about two hundred and fifty dollars. I would include my share of the profit from the grain we controlled last year.

FAN

If it is you they are after, it is possible that I, also, might be able to raise two hundred and fifty dollars. I'd overlooked the matter of the grain.

MEI-LAN

Wouldn't it be better for you both to go into the hills?

FAN

We have never done it before.

MEI-LAN

After all, there might be guerrillas in the Village.

FATHER

I haven't seen them.

MEI-LAN

If there should be guerrillas in the Village, the Japanese say they'll shoot us all.

FAN

The bandits always threaten much more than they ever carry out.

(LI-HSIEN enters DR. He is dressed in worn and dirty American clothes. He is carrying two handbags covered with labels of American hotels and trans-Pacific shipping lines. His hair is disheveled, and he has lost his hat)

FATHER

(Excited far beyond his usual calm)

My son.

LI-HSIEN

Father.

(LI-HSIEN and FATHER exchange greetings Chinese-style)

FAN

Young Master Chou. Welcome to the Village.

LI-HSIEN

Master Fan.

(FAN and LI-HSIEN exchange greetings Chinese-fashion)

MEI-LAN

Did you have a good journey, Li-hsien?

(MEI-LAN and LI-HSIEN shake hands cordially)

LI-HSIEN

No.

MEI-LAN

What was the matter?

LI-HSIEN

Everything.

FATHER

You're troubled, my son.

LI-HSIEN

There'll be a time when you'll know how I feel.

MEI-LAN

You're trembling, Li-hsien.

LI-HSIEN

I wish to see the Grandmother, my wife, and the children.

FATHER

Of course, we shall bring them in.

MEI-LAN

Are you ill, Li-hsien?

LI-HSIEN

I'm sick—sick unto death.

FATHER

My son.

MEI-LAN

Tell me what it is.

LI-HSIEN

Sick unto death of theory, of intellectual discussion, of false idealism, empty promises, of international horse trading . . . America must act.

(Quickly)

I'll explain this later.

(As he exits UR)

Grandmother! Grandmother!

(FATHER, FAN, MEI-LAN stare UR. LI-HSIEN has not taken the suitcase with him)

FATHER

Education in America has done strange things to my son.

MEI-LAN

He is tired and worried. That's all.

(LUNG enters DR)

LUNG

Master Chou, it is said in the Village that the Japanese will be here shortly.

FATHER

Shortly? How long's that?

LUNG

One hour . . . two perhaps.

FAN

That doesn't allow us much time.

(LUNG exits DR)

FATHER

It will be well for us to go to the Grain Shop, Master Fan.

FAN

The money for the bandits needs to be prepared carefully.

FATHER

It is always well to have a third person present.

FAN

Will you come with us, my daughter?

MEI-LAN

Yes, Father.

(FATHER, FAN and MEI-LAN exit DL. LI-HSIEN enters UR. He moves in a nervous distracted manner. LI-HSIEN takes rope off suitcase, ties a noose at one end over a beam, and stands on the table RC. LI-HSIEN ties the noose over his neck and adjusts the rope to a proper length. Then he disengages himself and climbs down. He takes some papers out of the other suitcase. He places several envelopes on the table RC. He holds one of the papers in his hand and paces up and down the room in a determined manner. LI-HSIEN reads to himself from the document. Pleased with what he has read, LI-HSIEN puts down the paper and climbs up on the table. He fixes the noose around his neck. As LI-HSIEN attempts to kick the table away

from under him, LI-MENG enters DL with two GUERRILLAS. They hold the table so that LI-HSIEN cannot kick it over. LI-MENG and the two GUERRILLAS are dressed in the green uniforms of the guerrillas. These are similar to an ordinary army uniform, somewhat roughly made out of cheap cloth. They wear leather belts and carry Mauser pistols. They have peaked caps and the Nationalist badge)

LI-MENG

Get him down.

(The two GUERRILLAS get LI-HSIEN down from the table. LI-HSIEN struggles, but the two GUERRILLAS hold him)

LI-HSIEN

Let me die! Let me die!

LI-MENG

I really believe you mean it.

LI-HSIEN

Let me die!

LI-MENG

That is a luxury you cannot indulge in.

(LI-HSIEN struggles until he is weak and submissive)

Release him.

(The GUERRILLAS release LI-HSIEN)

That's all.

(The GUERRILLAS exit DL) What's back of this, Older Brother?
(LI-HSIEN is dazed and sullen. LI-MENG picks up the pieces of paper and starts reading)

LI-HSIEN

Don't read that.

(LI-HSIEN snatches the paper from LI-MENG. LI-HSIEN crowds all the papers into a suitcase and closes it)

LI-MENG

Why have you tried to take your life, Older Brother?

(LI-MENG takes down the rope and coils it. LI-HSIEN can't bring himself to speak)

This is good rope.

LI-HSIEN

What must you be thinking of me now, Li-meng!

LI-MENG

To a soldier, a human life becomes infinitely precious. Why would you be so wasteful with yours?

LI-HSIEN

Everything I believe in has proved false.

LI-MENG

Go on, Older Brother.

LI-HSIEN

My teachers made me believe in the League of Nations, in the world influence of the Democracies, in international justice, in the leadership of Great Britain and America . . .

(Bitterly)

There was no action. All that was only talk.

LI-MENG

Of course it was.

LI-HSIEN

But I believed it. I still do. If the Democracies would realize their power, exert their influence, they could still save us.

LI-MENG

We have to save ourselves first.

LI-HSIEN

I'll commit suicide and then all these great talkers who take no responsibility for what they say will be shamed into action.

LI-MENG

What makes you think so?

LI-HSIEN

I have letters here addressed to the University, to my teachers in America, to many leading editors, and to several writers of textbooks.

LI-MENG

What good will letters do?

LI-HSIEN

I explain the reasons for my suicide. I want to do all I can to awaken America. She alone is our hope. My death will be my greatest contribution to China.

LI-MENG

You must burn these letters, Li-hsien.

LI-HSIEN

You may stop me now, Li-meng, but I'll find another time. I am

dedicated to this purpose. America can save us if America realizes. Many people will be influenced by these documents.

LI-MENG

When you've burned the letters, I'd like to have you move with my guerrilla unit for a time.

LI-HSIEN

A bunch of peasants blowing up a bridge a month . . . Not for me.

LI-MENG

We have forced the Japanese to triple the number of soldiers in North China.

LI-HSIEN

My letters will reach some of the most important men in the United States. Their eyes will be opened.

LI-MENG

But that won't help our Village.

LI-HSIEN

I'm not thinking of our Village; I'm thinking of China.

LI-MENG

In this Village and the thousands like it is the hope for China.

LI-HSIEN

I have my contribution to the cause of China. And I'll handle it my way.

(MEI-LAN enters DL. She is startled to see LI-MENG)

MEI-LAN

Li-meng! You said you'd leave the Village.

LI-MENG

I'm needed here.

MEI-LAN

If you stay, you endanger the life of every human being here.

LI-HSIEN

So that's your guerrilla tactics. Seek shelter with the peasants and pay for their hospitality by bringing them disaster.

LI-MENG

My presence has nothing to do with the coming of the Japanese. Our spies tell us this Village is to be destroyed as a reprisal for the blowing up of the bridge the other night.

MEI-LAN

Didn't the guerrillas blow up the bridge, Li-meng?

LI-MENG

Yes.

LI-HSIEN

Then you're responsible.

LI-MENG

But that's the kind of war we're fighting.

MEI-LAN

But why do you bring this to our Village and our families?

LI-MENG

Our armies can't hold the Japanese in a war of positions. We don't have the soldiers and equipment. Therefore, we must use every man, woman and child. We'll surround the Japanese spearheads with living flesh.

LI-HSIEN

You blow up trains and destroy bridges. Then you run off to the hills while the peasants take the punishment.

LI-MENG

But trains are difficult to replace and bridges are not often built overnight.

MEI-LAN

You're not content to do this in other places. You come right to your own doorstep.

LI-MENG

There is no doorstep safe from the Japanese.

LI-HSIEN

It's ridiculous to say the whole of China has to fight the Japanese. Old and young. Men and women. Children in the fields.

LI-MENG

We have no weapons but ourselves.

LI-HSIEN

You're committing national suicide.

LI-MENG

It's you, Older Brother, who have used the word "suicide."

MEI-LAN

Just by being alive—by the very fact of existing—I'm supposedly fighting Japan and therefore subject to military action?

LI-MENG

A clear explanation.

MEI-LAN

But I do not choose to do this. We're not ready.

LI-MENG

There are many who do not choose to resist.

LI-HSIEN

We're all in danger of being killed, whether we fight or whether we don't.

LI-MENG

Yes.

MEI-LAN

By blowing up that bridge near to this village, you've decided that we'd be among the first to die.

LI-HSIEN

A useless, irresponsible action.

LI-MENG

It all depends on whether or not you follow my advice.

LI-HSIEN

I've had enough of your advice!

LI-MENG

(*To MEI-LAN*)

Have you got your belongings together?

MEI-LAN

No.

LI-MENG

I told you to when I first saw you this morning.

MEI-LAN

This whole day has been so unreal, so fantastic.

LI-MENG

Has the rest of the family assembled everything that can be carried away?

MEI-LAN

Imagine how far anyone could get telling my father to collect his possessions and run to the hills.

LI-HSIEN

This is all a futile business.

LI-MENG

I tell you the truth.

LI-HSIEN

And a sorry thing it is.

MEI-LAN

What can we do?

LI-MENG

Will you listen to me?

MEI-LAN

You got us into this. I have to listen.

LI-MENG

If the Japanese are sending fifty men to destroy the Village, the guerrillas will see that not one of them escapes. If two hundred are coming with heavy equipment, there is no use trying to stop them.

LI-HSIEN

You run away!

LI-MENG

Exactly.

MEI-LAN

Without putting up any kind of fight?

LI-MENG

Without putting up any kind of fight.

LI-HSIEN

Why?

LI-MENG

The Japanese cannot strike out in all directions at once. We hold the initiative because they can never know where next we'll attack or where to find us after we do.

LI-HSIEN

A slow, hopeless, tragic waste. There will be a postscript to my letters before I send them out.

MEI-LAN

When will this awful suspense be over?

LI-HSIEN

It can never be over.

LI-MENG

You'd best start preparing now, in case we must move quickly.

MEI-LAN

When will the Japanese be here? Can't you tell us?

LI-MENG

Prepare to run for the hills. That's all I can say.

(LUNG enters DR)

LI-HSIEN

Hello, Lung.

LUNG

Young Master Li-hsien. Welcome. The Grandmother wishes you to visit her. Your wife is also in the Grandmother's room.

LI-HSIEN

What's the matter?

LUNG

They want your opinion on several matters.

LI-HSIEN

They'll certainly get it.

(LI-HSIEN *exits UR*. LUNG *exits DR*)

LI-MENG

I cannot convince you by reason.

MEI-LAN

Convince me of what?

LI-MENG

Of the rightness of our guerrilla fighting.

MEI-LAN

Is that what you call "reason"?

LI-MENG

Yes.

MEI-LAN

I'm not convinced.

LI-MENG

Will you believe me then even if you're not convinced?

MEI-LAN

How could I?

LI-MENG

By trusting me.

MEI-LAN

What have you done to make me trust you?

LI-MENG

I know what I'm doing. You must have faith in me.

MEI-LAN

You're asking the impossible.

LI-MENG

Will you do the impossible?

MEI-LAN

I don't know, Li-meng. How can I know?

LI-MENG

I should take you with me into the hills anyway. No man ever wanted a woman to believe him more than I want you to believe me now.

MEI-LAN

I'm sorry, Li-meng.

(FATHER and FAN enter DL. They are talking excitedly so that they do not notice LI-MENG)

FAN

All we need to do now is wait.

FATHER

The villagers will direct them to the house of the head man.

(Nodding)

Yes, I feel that we've thought of everything.

LI-MENG

Yes, Father, but you haven't thought of the Japanese.

FATHER

Get out of this house, immediately. We have everything arranged and now you bring disaster upon us. Get out of here.

(One of LI-MENG'S men enters DR)

GUERRILLA

The Japanese are moving up in force from the east. They have two hundred and fifty men, one field piece, five thirty-millimeter machine guns.

LI-MENG

Take as many villagers as will go with you. We'll march west.

(GUERRILLA exits DR. To FATHER) Call the villagers together immediately. Tell them to remove everything they can carry to the hills.

FATHER

I am an old man and have had much more experience than you, Li-meng. We have made our arrangements. The only thing that can possibly upset them is the presence of your guerrillas. You will leave this house immediately and not disturb the Village.

FAN

And don't try to take my daughter with you.

MEI-LAN

The Japanese have no reason to destroy us. We are only civilians.

LI-MENG

Lung! Lung!

(LUNG enters immediately DR)

Lung! Call the household together. Tell them to leave for the hills.

FATHER

Lung! Do nothing of the kind. Let the family remain where it is. I would like only to see Li-hsien.

(LUNG exits DR)

MEI-LAN

Civilians don't fight. How can they?

LI-MENG

You won't believe me until you've suffered.

(LI-HSIEN enters UR)

It's your own choice if you remain.

LI-HSIEN

We remain. You soldiers can make your own decisions—but don't try to make ours!

LI-MENG

What would you have us do? Fight a superior Japanese force and all be killed? We must be logical.

LI-HSIEN

If we retreat with the guerrillas, we'll be hunted down and killed.

LI-MENG

The Japanese have never been able to catch us in the hills.

(Crossing DL and talking to men off-stage)

You men—the first four—

(Turning to the room)

I cannot convince you by reason.

(Four GUERRILLAS enter DL)

I must use force.

(Pointing)

Put these people on horses. They are going with us to the hills. If necessary tie them up. But they all must go.

(LI-HSIEN suddenly seizes two grenades from the belt of one of the soldiers. LI-HSIEN quickly backs away, holding the grenades in a menacing position)

LI-HSIEN

I know how to use these. Stand back.

LI-MENG

(*To the GUERRILLAS*)

Be careful.

FIRST GUERRILLA

Will he use the grenades?

LI-MENG

Yes.

FIRST GUERRILLA

What are your orders?

LI-MENG

He is my brother . . . This is my family. I must wait.

SECOND GUERRILLA

It is dangerous to wait any longer.

LI-MENG

Mei-lan! What can I do? Help me.

MEI-LAN

I think you'd better go.

LI-MENG

Father . . .

FATHER

Do not call me Father.

LI-MENG

I'll return tomorrow.

FIRST GUERRILLA

It is time, Li-meng. Our unit is in danger.

LI-MENG

(*Looking at the house and the people in it*)

Goodbye.

(*The FOUR GUERRILLAS and LI-MENG exit DL*)

LI-HSIEN

(*Puts down grenades*)

So that's that. I hate to threaten my own brother but soldiers must be taught to keep to their own trade. You can't fight the Japanese with civilians.

FATHER

You are wise, my son.

LI-HSIEN

What this country needs is not guerrillas but diplomacy to get us powerful allies. All we can do now is to play a waiting game.

FAN

I feel much better now.

MEI-LAN

How long must we wait, Li-hsien?

LI-HSIEN

That depends on many things.

FATHER

I am glad that you will be here to help us in the negotiations with the Japanese.

LI-HSIEN

If there's any trouble, call me.

(LI-HSIEN exits DL)

FAN

(Sitting down at table RC)

At last we're in peace.

MEI-LAN

I wonder if we shouldn't have taken Li-meng a little more seriously.

FATHER

Nonsense, Mei-lan, I was right in ridding the family of Li-meng. But Li-hsien . . . Perhaps this modern education does produce men of judgment after all.

MEI-LAN

What is that noise I hear?

FAN

Sounds like an ungreased cart to me.

(GRANDMOTHER enters UR. She is very infirm and has to be helped by LUNG who puts her on the k'ang UC. LUNG stands by GRANDMOTHER waiting further orders)

GRANDMOTHER

What were all those horses dashing away to the west?

(There is the sound of excited voices offstage)

FATHER

The Japanese bandits will soon be coming. I don't think you ought to stay here.

GRANDMOTHER

Even a bandit respects old age.

FATHER

Master Fan and I can best attend to this.

GRANDMOTHER

Nothing goes on in this house without my knowledge.

FAN

Would it not be wise, Master Chou, to have the womenfolk go to their rooms?

MEI-LAN

I'm not afraid, Father.

FAN

You'd best join Li-hsien's wife and help tend her children.

MEI-LAN

If you wish, Father.

(MEI-LAN exits UR. The noise has become greater. The sound of the tanks from the east grows louder. There are occasional shots)

FAN

These are the noisiest bandits I've ever heard.

FATHER

Sounds a little strange to me.

FAN

Do you think everything is all right, Master Chou?

FATHER

There is nothing to worry about.

FAN

I heard some shots.

FATHER

I recall a visit of some bandits the year that Mei-lan was born. You remember how the bandits fired some shots to scare the villagers.

GRANDMOTHER

Lung!

LUNG

Yes, Grandmother.

GRANDMOTHER

I smell smoke.

FATHER

There is something burning, Lung.

GRANDMOTHER

See what it is.

(LUNG exits DR. He shows no haste in his movements. There is a burst of noise, a curious blend of shouts, rifle fire, and oncoming tanks)

FAN

They seem to wish to scare the villagers more than necessary.

FATHER

They all have their methods.

FAN

I wonder what the Japanese bandits are like.

FATHER

It's about time their leader came along.

GRANDMOTHER

What do you make of all this noise?

FATHER

Perhaps we ought to have some tea and cakes ready.

(LUNG rushes in DR)

LUNG

The fire cannot be put out.

GRANDMOTHER

I never heard of such a thing.

LUNG

It's coming from the neighbor's courtyard.

FATHER

Could the bandits have set fire to the Village?

LUNG

It is consuming the very walls of the kitchen.

FATHER

We must go to the courtyard. Lung! Help Grandmother out.

(LUNG assists GRANDMOTHER out DL. There are wisps of smoke seeping in DR. After a slight pause, gunfire bursts out)

MEI-LAN

(Rushing in UR)

Your daughter-in-law and the children. They went into the side road to escape the flames. They were shot. They were shot.

FATHER

My daughter-in-law?

MEI-LAN

Yes.

FATHER

The children—all three.

MEI-LAN

Four bodies are lying in the side road.

FAN

This is unbelievable.

(LUNG staggers into room DL. LUNG is wounded in the shoulder)

LUNG

The Venerable Grandmother is dead. They shot her out of my arms. I fell with her. They have machine guns and tanks.

(LUNG falls down L of door DL)

(Two big explosions in rapid succession. FIRST JAPANESE SOLDIER with sub-machine gun enters DL. FIRST JAPANESE SOLDIER pulls the trigger. There is a burst of gunfire. FATHER and MASTER FAN fall across table. FIRST JAPANESE SOLDIER steps U of door DL. LI-HSIEN enters DL. FIRST JAPANESE SOLDIER hits him over the head and knocks him out. FIRST JAPANESE SOLDIER motions to SOLDIERS offstage to enter DL. SECOND and THIRD JAPANESE SOLDIERS enter DL. The THREE SOLDIERS quickly pile all movable objects over FATHER and MASTER FAN. MEI-LAN is helpless spectator. When she sees the SOLDIERS throwing the furniture on FATHER and MASTER FAN, MEI-LAN rushes screaming to MASTER FAN. SECOND and THIRD JAPANESE SOLDIERS, one on each side, seize MEI-LAN and carry her out DR. FIRST SOLDIER sets fire to the pile of furniture. There are more shouts, screams, sound of tanks. FIRST JAPANESE SOLDIER exits DR)

CURTAIN

SCENE 2

SCENE: *The scene is the same. It is early in the morning, the following day. A cold, gray light spreads over the ruins of the house.*

The upper wall is burned down. The other two walls are partially standing. Practically no furniture is left in the room. There is debris here and there scattered on the stage. Sound of men and of horses. A few offstage orders.

Enter LI-MENG followed by MA and LI.

LI

It follows the usual pattern.

MA

It's not so bad as some villages. We've already found survivors from thirty families out of the original sixty. A good many of the houses are burned down, but the crops haven't suffered very much.

LI

Those who came out to the hills can't thank us too much.

LI-MENG

If they'd only believed, we could have saved so many more.

MA

Wasn't this your family house, Li-meng?

LI-MENG

Yes, Ma. This was my family house. Outside lie my father and Fan the taxgatherer. The Japanese have a genius for shooting the people who would have helped them most.

(LI-MENG wanders around)

MA

There wouldn't be much chance for us if the Japanese dwarfs had any political sense. We shall get quite a few recruits from this village now.

LI

I'd never have left the carpenter shop if they hadn't thrown my family down a well.

LI-MENG

We can't afford to wait until every village is attacked before the people join us. Time is too short.

MA

You're right on that. The Japanese will be sending in large forces before the summer rains begin.

LI

Li-meng, what do you find?

LI-MENG

Besides my father, they killed my grandmother and all three children of the daughter-in-law. Lung, the servant, is wounded but he'll be all right. The daughter-in-law I'm not sure about. They're working over her now. But there are two people we cannot find.

MA

Who are they?

LI-MENG

The taxgatherer's daughter, Mei-lan. She was here in this room when I left.

LI

I suppose the Japanese have used her and left her by the roadside.

MA

That was the girl who always wrote you letters, wasn't it?

LI-MENG

Yes.

MA

Who else?

LI-MENG

My older brother, Li-hsien.

LI

I'll let you know if I find him.

(LI exits DR. MA makes a kind of shelter with matting U. LI-MENG busies himself cleaning up the debris. LI-HSIEN enters quietly DL. LI-HSIEN is dazed)

LI-MENG

Are you hurt, Older Brother?

LI-HSIEN

No.

LI-MENG

You're fortunate.

LI-HSIEN

I wish they had killed me.

LI-MENG

What happened?

LI-HSIEN

I went to the gate at the courtyard. When I saw that they were going to shoot and kill everybody, I let go with the hand grenades. Then I lost consciousness. Sometime later I revived. I didn't know what I was doing. All I could think of was the family. They were dead. I had caused their death.

LI-MENG

Where have you been since yesterday, Older Brother?

LI-HSIEN

I ran after the Japanese. I wanted them to kill me too.

LI-MENG

You are better now.

LI-HSIEN

I'm worse. I've had time to think. I've killed my own family.

LI-MENG

You've two hands and courage and now you know. You're ready to fight with us.

LI-HSIEN

Never, Younger Brother. Your guerrillas brought the Japanese to our Village. We are both guilty. We are murderers. We've destroyed our own families.

(Pitifully)

Is there no one left?

LI-MENG

Ku-lien is wounded but alive. All your children are dead. The rest are done for except Lung.

LI-HSIEN

Where is my wife?

MA

I can show you the way.

(MA and LI-HSIEN exit UR. LI-MENG works at clearing up the rubble. LUNG and MEI-LAN enter DL. MEI-LAN moves slowly, with uncertain steps)

LI-MENG

Mei-lan!

(MEI-LAN *does not reply*. MEI-LAN *turns away and sits down on a pile of rubbish* UL. LI-MENG *crosses quickly to LUNG*)

Lung! Where did you find her?

LUNG

At the Feng Family house.

LI-MENG

Is she hurt?

LUNG

The Feng Family Grandmother permitted Mistress Fan to come here.

LI-MENG

Do you know what happened to her?

LUNG

The dwarfs left her unconscious by the river bank. She crawled in the night to the Feng Family house. The Feng Family Grandmother looked after her.

(LI-MENG *has difficulty controlling himself*)

LI-MENG

(*To LUNG—in reality, talking to himself*)

When I came to the first burned village, filled with the smell of death, I thought I couldn't live through it. Next time, they told me, it will not be so bad. That was a lie. I've come back to a thousand villages and each time it's worse.

(*After a pause—regaining his self-control*)

How is your wound, Lung?

LUNG

Well enough.

(*Sits down*. MA *enters* UR)

MA

We've found some medical supplies. Is there someone in the Village who can use them?

LI-MENG

(*Looking at MEI-LAN*)

Yes.

MA

Send her first to Li-hsien's wife.

(*Exits* UR. LI-MENG *crosses to MEI-LAN*)

LI-MENG

It is good to see you alive, Mei-lan.

(MEI-LAN *does not reply*)

We need you very much. There is no one here who understands nursing the way you do. And all this medicine is worthless unless it is correctly used.

(*Firmly*)

Mei-lan! Do you hear me?

(LI-HSIEN *enters UR*)

LI-HSIEN

Can't someone do something about my wife?

LI-MENG

How is she, Li-hsien?

LI-HSIEN

She's dying!

MEI-LAN

Perhaps I can help a little, Li-hsien.

LI-HSIEN

It is good to see you alive. Did they hurt you?

MEI-LAN

I'll go to your wife.

(MEI-LAN *exits UR. LUNG stands up*)

LI-MENG

Are you better now?

LUNG

Yes, Young Master.

LI-MENG

Heat all the water you can. We'll need it for dressing the wounds. Then prepare some millet.

(LI *enters DR*)

LI-HSIEN

Why don't you have Lung do a little pillaging? You've fought so hard that surely your men deserve chickens, rice and dainties.

LI-MENG

(*Ignoring LI-HSIEN's outburst of anger and speaking to LI*)

This is my brother, Li-hsien.

LI

Hello, Li-hsien.

LI-HSIEN

Hello, Li.

LI

You are suspicious of us, Li-hsien.

LI-HSIEN

Why not? Just look at your handiwork.

LI

(Quietly but firmly)

You may disagree with us, Li-hsien, but at least try to understand us. Our guerrilla forces pay for everything they eat. The cloth for our uniforms is inferior to that worn by the peasant. Our food is not only paid for, it must also be inferior. We are the servants of the people—not the masters.

LI-MENG

Find out how the villagers feel now that they've returned, Li.

(SUN-PAO enters DL. SUN-PAO is the political leader now. He talks rapidly and with confidence. He has as much authority in his sphere as does LI-MENG in military matters. SUN-PAO has one empty left sleeve of his tunic tied to his side. His left arm has been completely amputated)

SUN-PAO

Our most honorable families lived in a very stupid village. Practically all of the leaders managed to get themselves shot. There isn't a man here who can read and write.

(LI exits DL)

LI-MENG

Sun-Pao, you remember Li-hsien, my older brother?

LI-HSIEN

You've lived up to your early promise, Sun-Pao.

SUN-PAO

I didn't realize you were caught in the raid, Li-hsien.

LI-MENG

Li-hsien is now head man of the Village, Sun-Pao.

SUN-PAO

That's right.

LI-MENG

There is a great opportunity for you here, Li-hsien.

SUN-PAO

Yes. You're the new head man. We'll call in the villagers so you can talk to them.

LI-HSIEN

You want me to give you my congratulations, I suppose, on behalf of the Village for your brilliant defense of our lives and property.

SUN-PAO

No, not quite that. You see, your job is to get this place into operation again. Many have died, and there's no one to cultivate their land. You'll have to divide the land up among the available people. Then you need a new tax collector, somebody young and honest and directly responsible to our own government. You'll have to set up a village mobilization committee to look after your part in the war. Tonight you must appoint guards at each gate and issue passports to all those who want to come and go. That's the only control over spies. This Village has to be an active unit of the guerrilla area.

LI-HSIEN

Who are you to tell me what to do in my own village?

SUN-PAO

Li-meng is Military Commander and I am Political Commander. We are appointed by an elected government which already controls ten million people and two provinces. We're part of the National Government of China.

LI-HSIEN

If I do not recognize your authority?

SUN-PAO

We'll not demand your cooperation. We merely request it. The work has to be done. If you do not do it, others can be found who will. Your position here in the Village is such that, if you decided to help us, we could move on to other work within twenty-four hours. If you do not, it may take us several weeks. We merely show you the way. It is for you to decide.

LI-HSIEN

(Ironically)

You are most kind.

(Enter MEI-LAN UR)

MEI-LAN

Li-hsien?

LI-HSIEN /

Yes, Mei-lan.

MEI-LAN

The wife has regained consciousness.

LI-HSIEN

Will she live?

MEI-LAN

She is dulled and without feeling. The death of her children, the burning of the Village, the loss of her house—what is left for her?

LI-HSIEN

Yes, what is left for her?

LI-MENG

That is for you to say, Li-hsien.

MEI-LAN

Don't delay, Li-hsien. There may be only a few moments for you to talk to her.

LI-HSIEN

But what can I say?

(LI-HSIEN looks at MEI-LAN, LI-MENG, and SUN-PAO. He exits slowly UR)

LI-MENG

Sun-Pao, when are you going to assemble the villagers?

SUN-PAO

At once.

(Enter LI from DL)

What reports do you bring from the Village?

LI

The peasants who escaped to the hills are glad to be alive but the sight of the Village frightens them. Yesterday they were in great spirits. Today they're afraid the Japanese will come back. They're torn between fear and hope.

SUN-PAO

We need the cooperation of the railroad villages, more than any of the others.

LI-MENG

Their loyalty is absolutely necessary. One spy in any of the railroad villages and it would be impossible to maneuver in this area.

LI

Yet if the villagers cooperate they're afraid of more reprisal raids.

LI-MENG

It's a very difficult situation.

(LUNG enters DR with millet)

SUN-PAO

Ask the villagers to meet here, Li. I still believe I can find leadership within the Village.

(SUN-PAO stands DR and eats millet with LUNG. LI exits DL.

LI-MENG and MEI-LAN find places to sit down on the debris L)

MEI-LAN

This is the end of my dreams, Li-meng.

LI-MENG

There is never an end to dreaming.

MEI-LAN

You can't start again when everything has been destroyed.

LI-MENG

Nothing has been destroyed.

MEI-LAN

(With a gesture)

Look around you.

LI-MENG

The people are still here. They need what you can bring them more desperately than ever before. Open your eyes, you no longer dream of the people you must help. They exist. They are real. They are suffering and dying all about you.

MEI-LAN

My village, my father—how can I stand it?

LI-MENG

Will Ku-lien recover?

MEI-LAN

Does she want to live?

LI-MENG

Will my older brother bring Ku-lien that hope?

MEI-LAN

It depends upon what Li-hsien finds within himself.

LI-MENG

The villagers will turn toward you for guidance, Mei-lan.

MEI-LAN

To me? Why? What for?

LI-MENG

Dressing of wounds, medicine, food . . . care of injured and orphaned children . . . the sick . . . the dying . . .

MEI-LAN

That's just what I've always been doing.

LI-MENG

Only now the *entire* responsibility rests on you.

MEI-LAN

The entire responsibility?

LI-MENG

Who else has the knowledge and experience?

MEI-LAN

It is true. There's no one else.

LI-MENG

The people of the Village will come to you, Mei-lan. What will you say?

MEI-LAN

They need me, don't they? Ku-lien, Lung, Tai, Wen—the women and the children, the living and the dying . . . they'll turn to me for help.

LI-MENG

Yes, Mei-lan.

MEI-LAN

What has happened to me is of no consequence, is it, when so very many need me?

LI-MENG

Even death doesn't matter when you have faith in what you live for.

MEI-LAN

Did you know I came here wanting to die?

LI-MENG

Yes.

MEI-LAN

And do you know now I don't want to die?

LI-MENG

Yes, Mei-lan.

MEI-LAN

How can you be so wise?

LI-MENG

I've dug too many graves not to know that the human spirit is indestructible.

MEI-LAN

Some day will I have your strength?

LI-MENG

Some day you will have my beliefs.

(SUN-PAO crosses to LI-MENG)

SUN-PAO

Li-meng, who could best convince the villagers that they have to work with us?

MEI-LAN

They would listen to me.

LI-MENG

And believe you.

SUN-PAO

Mei-lan! Will you speak to them?

MEI-LAN

What should I say?

SUN-PAO

The words will come.

MEI-LAN

Surely you've some advice.

LI-MENG

An hour ago you wanted to die. Tell them what changed your mind.

(Enter LI-HSIEN UR. He remains in the background unseen by MEI-LAN)

SUN-PAO

Lung, that was excellent millet. Serve everyone until it is gone.

(LUNG seems a little surprised but immediately accepts the situation. At this time MA and LI enter with more PEASANTS DL. During the remainder of the scene LUNG serves the millet. The PEASANTS are collected mainly at DL, most of them sitting tailor-fashion on the floor. There is a certain amount of informal coming and going. MEI, TAI and FENG are prominent among the PEASANTS)

(SUN-PAO moves to C and speaks from a position from which he can address the PEASANTS DL and the audience at the same time. He stands on a pile of bricks)

SUN-PAO

These Japanese dwarfs: you've seen that they're not ordinary bandits. Master Chou and Taxgatherer Fan were ready to deal with them. Master Chou and Taxgatherer Fan were shot.

(Murmurs of agreement)

And who else lies dead in the village?

Where are your wives? your children? your mothers? your grandmothers? your friends? Where is over half the Village? Dead! Filled with bullets. Thrown down wells. Raped and left to die beside the road.

MEI

It is true.

WEN

Our crops are gone.

TAI

Our children are dead.

MEI

Our houses are burned down.

SUN-PAO

You who ran to the hills: Did you not see the tanks? Bigger than a house. Faster than a horse. With guns spitting death in all directions. These great steel monsters crush your houses, tear out your crops; and nothing we have ever known can stop them. From the hills you saw the truth of what I'm saying.

(The CROWD mumbles agreement)

Who were inside those tanks? The dwarfs. Mad with the smell of blood. They don't want your money or your grain. They want you. And they want you not as farmers working in your fields but as dead bodies rotting in ditches. Until the day when no Chinese anywhere is left with the will to resist. Then what? Slavery! Japanese officials will rule you; Japanese merchants will take your money; Japanese landlords will own your land; Japanese officers will force your sons into the Army; Japanese factory owners will put you in chains and make you sit at a machine all day and all night.

MEI

Will the dwarfs come again?

SUN-PAO

Again and again and again.

TAI

We can't fight tanks with our hands.

MEI

We are helpless before their might.

WEN

What can we do?

MEI

Tell us! What can we do?

(There is a mounting terror from the villagers)

SUN-PAO

Join the Nationalist movement. Follow us.

MEI

But the dwarfs will come back.

TAI

You ran from the tanks.

WEN

You did not fight.

TAI

You did not fight.

WEN

The dwarfs will come back.

SUN-PAO

We will teach you how to fight. We will show you the way to destroy the dwarfs.

But you must have faith in us.

(Shouting)

Down with Japanese Imperialism! Down with Japanese Imperialism!

(There is a disorganized and half-hearted response from the CROWD. The idea is still new to them)

VILLAGERS

Where is the Young Master?

Where is Li-hsien?

Where is the new head man of the Village?

(The VILLAGERS call for LI-HSIEN. LI-HSIEN does not respond.

VILLAGERS increase their shouts for LI-HSIEN. SUN-PAO feels he is losing the support of the VILLAGERS)

SUN-PAO

Down with Japanese Imperialism! Down with Japanese Imperialism!

(A GUERRILLA enters DL, interrupting SUN-PAO)

GUERRILLA

Sun-Pao, the Japanese are returning.

(Consternation among the VILLAGERS. Those who are seated jump up. LI-MENG takes control)

LI-MENG

How many Japanese are there?

GUERRILLA

There are fifty men with two machine guns and five trucks.

LI-MENG

Which way are they coming?

GUERRILLA

From the east. They've just crossed the river.

LI-MENG

Does that road cut through the Wang Family Village?

GUERRILLA

Yes.

LI-MENG

Will the dwarfs expect resistance there?

SUN-PAO

The dwarfs have never met trouble at the Wang Family Village.

GUERRILLA

The column has been moving many hours. It is my opinion that the dwarfs will stop there for rest.

LI-MENG

Fifty of them, you say?

GUERRILLA

Yes, Li-meng.

LI-MENG

We could put our men on the roofs with grenades and in the houses with machine guns. Once their trucks are disabled and the machine guns destroyed, it would only be a matter of time.

SUN-PAO

How many men would it cost us?

LI-MENG

Not more than ten men.

SUN-PAO

It's worth it. We'll return tomorrow with Japanese guns, ammunition, food and equipment.

LI-MENG

(*To MEI-LAN*)

I leave the Village in your hands.

(*SUN-PAO and GUERRILLAS exit DL*)

MEI-LAN

Li-meng! What shall I do?

LI-MENG

These are your people. Speak to them.

(*LI-MENG exits DL*)

(*The VILLAGERS are uncertain. They turn to one another in anxious discussion. MEI-LAN walks slowly forward. Her presence causes the VILLAGERS to quiet down. MEI-LAN speaks quietly with poise and tranquillity. LI-HSIEN slowly exits UR*)

MEI-LAN

What happened to me is no longer my own personal shame. It is something done to the living body of China. I could have spent my days in remorse and sorrow if I had continued to think of myself alone. But now I am proud that this village, which I love so well, has suffered too. Yesterday I thought my father was right. Now I know that there cannot be any compromise with the Japanese dwarfs. What is more, I know that we must join with the guerrillas and believe in them as they believe in us. The dwarfs haven't taken the earth from beneath our feet. We'll refuse to surrender. We'll take every blow but always rise again. We'll grow food for our armies; give them shelter; be their eyes, their ears. We'll nurse their wounded. We'll accept their leadership. We're not one small village. We're all the villages of China. We're not a few people coming back to the ashes of our homes. We're like the Phoenix. We rise again. We're all China taking strength right here . . . now . . . at this moment. We are a new people.

C U R T A I N

ACT THREE

TIME: *September, 1938.*

SCENE: *The main room of the Chou Family has been rebuilt of yellow mud in a simple, usable way. The form of the room in Act One has been preserved, but the furnishings are poor and makeshift. The room, however, is neat and clean.*

KU-LIEN is painting a poster at the desk R. LI-HSIEN is pacing about the room with a letter in his hand.

LI-HSIEN

Don't you realize, Ku-lien, that this letter is signed by the Generalissimo himself?

(Holding the letter before KU-LIEN)

Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. That's his signature. Think what a difference this letter would have made if it had come to me a year ago—or six months ago. Any time before the Village was attacked, for that matter. Right now I'd be in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

KU-LIEN

Do you want to go, Li-hsien?

LI-HSIEN

Yes, I want to go, I have always wanted to go. Somehow I feel that I would have more to say now than I would have had before. But it would mean leaving the Village.

KU-LIEN

You have done much for the Village, Li-hsien. They talk of you down at the stream.

LI-HSIEN

I have to stay here. This is the house where I brought death to my father, my grandmother, and my children. If I'd only followed Li-meng they'd have been spared.

KU-LIEN

You did what you believed was right, my husband.

LI-HSIEN

That's what you always say. You've been very patient with me, Ku-lien, after what I've done.

KU-LIEN

You must go to Chungking if you feel that is right, Li-hsien.

LI-HSIEN

I hear them coming for their lessons, Ku-lien.

KU-LIEN

We must get ready for them.

(KU-LIEN puts away poster and places the writing materials on the table RC. LI-HSIEN helps her)

The singing has been very good lately.

LI-HSIEN

Do you think so?

KU-LIEN

Yes, Li-hsien. You are a good teacher. Everybody in the Village now can read and write a little, too.

LI-HSIEN

That's only the beginning, Ku-lien.

(MEI, TAI, WEN enter DL and exchange greetings with KU-LIEN and LI-HSIEN. MEI, TAI and WEN take their places at the table, and start to draw characters. BOY and GIRL enter DL and go to the table. They, too, start to draw characters. KU-LIEN sits down at the table and joins in the work)

(Showing MEI)

The character for house goes this way.

(Guiding TAI'S brush stroke)

Bear down; we have plenty of ink. That's one thing we can make ourselves.

(Pointing to WEN'S work)

An excellent piece of work.

(Examining the children's writing)

You're quick at drawing characters.

(Looking up)

Aren't the others coming?

WEN

Most of the Village has to prepare the millet for the guerrillas.

LI-HSIEN

We won't wait then. Let's have our singing lesson now.

(LI-HSIEN leads them in singing Chi-Lai. The song gets under way nicely when MEI-LAN enters DL quickly. MEI-LAN waits until the song is over. Before LI-HSIEN can start another song, MEI-LAN interrupts)

MEI-LAN

I'm sorry, Li-hsien, but I must call a meeting of the Village Committee immediately.

LI-HSIEN

Mei-lan! Our lesson has just begun!

MEI-LAN

This is extremely important.

LI-HSIEN

Will it be possible to continue the lesson after the meeting?

MEI-LAN

Yes.

LI-HSIEN

(To the MEN at the table)

We'll stop for a time now.

(Regretfully brushes, ink, and paper are put aside. The two CHILDREN quietly exit DL. MEI-LAN sits U of table. MEI and TAI are R; WEN L. MA enters DL with KAO. LI-HSIEN goes URC and quietly watches proceedings)

MEI-LAN

Ma has a case he wishes to present to us. What is it, Ma?

MA

Kao sold rice to the Japanese.

WEN

Other men have been shot for this.

MEI-LAN

I wish to ask Kao if he has anything to say in his defense.

KAO

It is true that I sold rice to the Japanese.

MEI-LAN

What does the Village Committee have to say?

TAI

There is only one punishment. Farmer Kao must be shot.

WEN

Is it agreed?

(COMMITTEE nods)

TAI

The sentence must be carried out at once.

MEI-LAN

(*To MA and LI*)

If that is your decision then—carry out the instructions of the Village Committee.

(*LI-HSIEN steps forward*)

LI-HSIEN

I have a request that I wish to make to the Committee.

(*MEI-LAN looks about the table*)

MEI-LAN

Are there any objections?

(*There are none*)

What is it, Li-hsien?

LI-HSIEN

I request that Kao be bound over to me. I'll guarantee that he'll not run away.

MEI-LAN

This is unusual, Li-hsien.

LI-HSIEN

Kao is not a criminal.

WEN

But he sold rice to the enemy.

LI-HSIEN

Kao had much to learn.

TAI

He knew our laws.

LI-HSIEN

In our village we cannot rule by the power of death. People learn slowly.

MEI

If Kao does it again your own life can be taken.

LI-HSIEN

I know Kao and I believe in him. We have talked many hours since he sold the rice.

TAI

But that doesn't bring the rice back.

LI-HSIEN

Killing Kao won't bring the rice back either.

MEI-LAN

But we have to stop others.

LI-HSIEN

Knowledge alone is sufficient punishment for the errors of ignorance. Farmer Kao now knows what he has done to you. He bore you no evil. He sold his rice where he has always sold it. He is a simple farmer who knew nothing of the world outside his village and the nearest market town. But he is the stuff of which we are made. I personally owe him a debt. At last I see that I'm as helpless without him as he is without me. I had to tell him the history of the world to show him why he can't sell rice to the Japanese. Why should he have understood economics and politics? He has shown me that it was my business to teach him. He now understands, why destroy him?

MEI-LAN

(*To the COMMITTEE*)

What is your desire?

MEI

Many of us used to sell to the Japanese before the Village was burned last spring.

TAI

Kao should be bound over to Li-hsien.

MEI-LAN

Do we all approve?

(*MEI-LAN looks about the table*)

Kao! You are bound over to Li-hsien. He'll be held responsible for your conduct.

KAO

I am willing to die for Li-hsien, but Li-hsien will never die because of me.

LI-HSIEN

Come along, Kao. There is work to do in getting supplies ready for our soldiers.

(*To the COMMITTEE*)

I accept your charge

(*LI-HSIEN and KAO exit DL*)

MEI-LAN

(*To MA*)

Was there something more?

MA

Mei-lan, our unit has no more medical supplies.

MEI-LAN

I'm sorry, but the Village gave all it had last month.

MA

Will there be more supplies coming?

MEI-LAN

The missionaries will bring us a little. We can smuggle some through the Japanese lines. But there'll not be much.

WEN

What is our greatest need?

MA

Medicine, bandages . . .

WEN

After medicine . . .

MA

Dynamite. A ton of dynamite. A ton of dynamite would bring our unit great happiness.

MEI-LAN

We are almost completely cut off from supplies.

MA

We're doing well, though. Two thousand dwarfs have been increased to twenty thousand dwarfs. Sentries are now stationed every hundred yards along the railroads. Often the sentries die at their watch. The dwarfs are building concrete pillboxes every third of a mile. It is costly, dangerous, and confusing for the dwarfs to hold the railroad.

WEN

The Committee is most pleased.

MA

The dwarfs have their strip of land along the railroads but the rest of the earth belongs to us.

MEI

Your report is good.

MA

Li-meng will give details of the fighting before we leave again.
(MA exits DL)

MEI-LAN

Every six months we're to elect a new Village Committee Chairman. The time has come.

MEI

I do not wish a new Chairman.

TAI

Mei-lan should always be our Chairman.

MEI-LAN

My work is in the field.

WEN

Your work is with us.

TAI

We've had little sickness this spring and summer.

MEI

That's true.

WEN

Our babies live, and our people are always in the fields working.

MEI-LAN

I'm very happy that you so honor me.

WEN

This is good.

MEI

You've helped us, Mei-lan.

MEI-LAN

It's a beautiful village that we have now. In six months it has grown again.

WEN

The dwarfs did not kill the Village.

MEI-LAN

And now we must elect a Magistrate.

WEN

It is agreed.

(*KU-LIEN enters DR and serves tea*)

Only one of us deserves to be Magistrate—Li-hsien.

MEI

We've talked of this man before, Mei-lan.

TAI

(*Looking at MEI-LAN*)

The choice does not need to please the entire Committee.

WEN

Our three votes will elect him.

TAI

Why are you so silent, Mei-lan?

MEI

Does our suggestion meet with your disapproval?

MEI-LAN

I could not speak for a moment. I approve so much.

(LUNG enters DR and serves tea. LUNG shows no change in manner, spirit, or dress)

MEI

You'll tell Li-hsien of the Committee's decision.

MEI-LAN

Gladly.

(MA enters DL. From time to time, throughout this act, GUERRILLAS are heard off stage singing Chi-Lai)

MA

Where are Ku-lien's posters?

LUNG

(Starting UR)

I'll bring the posters . . .

MA

Don't bother, I can get them.

(MA exits UR. LUNG in no way indicates that he is impressed by MA'S willingness to do what ordinarily would be his duty)

WEN

I wish to be relieved of my responsibility as Taxgatherer.

TAI

For what reason?

WEN

Li-hsien and Feng have spent many hours together. It is my opinion that Feng is the best man now for that work.

TAI

What if the Government sends down a taxgatherer?

WEN

It's more likely that the Government will ask us first.

MEI

True.

WEN

Few villages have a man who has been to a Chinese and an American University. Li-hsien knows everything about keeping records; how to collect rice and millet so each will know his share; how to work out the sum from many numbers. And Li-hsien has spent many hours with Feng.

TAI

I think we should accept Wen's resignation and appoint Feng the new Taxgatherer.

MEI-LAN

The Committee agrees. Has the Committee anything more to discuss?

(Silence)

We have been through sorrowful, dangerous days together. I've felt humble and grateful that I could serve you and the Village.

(Rising)

That's all.

(WEN, MEI, TAI rise and move toward exit DL. MA enters with KU-LIEN. MA carries an armful of posters)

MA

These are good posters.

(MA exits DL. MEI-LAN goes to KU-LIEN. WEN, MEI, TAI exit DL)

MEI-LAN

The Committee has selected Li-hsien as its Magistrate.

KU-LIEN

Li-hsien understands such matters.

MEI-LAN

Will you tell him?

KU-LIEN

You're Chairman of the Committee.

MEI-LAN

It would be better if you gave him the news.

KU-LIEN

No, Mei-lan.

MEI-LAN

I think you should, Ku-lien.

KU-LIEN

The days when the guerrillas are in the Village are busy for me.

I do not have the time.
(LI-HSIEN enters DL)

LI-HSIEN

I was told to come here.

KU-LIEN

Mei-lan wishes to speak with you.
(KU-LIEN exits DR)

LI-HSIEN

What is it, Mei-lan?

MEI-LAN

It's something very important for you. But it almost seems more important to me.

LI-HSIEN

I'm tired from loading millet for Li-meng.
(Pointing to table RC)

Sit down and we'll talk.

(LUNG enters with tea. LUNG serves tea to MEI-LAN and LI-HSIEN)

MEI-LAN

Have you been happy these last few months?

LI-HSIEN

No.

MEI-LAN

Why not?

LI-HSIEN

I wouldn't believe my brother, and I brought tragedy to my family. It's a kind of penance. I must stay. I must suffer this thing that I've done over and over again—a thousand times. I must relive every word, every syllable of stupidity. I must die with Li-meng's warning in my ears.

MEI-LAN

Isn't that over now?

LI-HSIEN

No.

MEI-LAN

You've worked, though.
(LUNG exits DR)

LI-HSIEN

I've worked until my hands bled those first few weeks. I studied

my father's accounts until I knew the history of every piece of property. I collected every scrap of record everywhere and I learned everything I could about the Village. I brought all I'd ever learned or know about organization, about keeping books, about planning . . . I've worked all right.

MEI-LAN

Hasn't that work made up for your conscience? Look what you've done for Kao.

LI-HSIEN

I've talked this over with myself through many nights. Reason, logic—nothing can erase the wrong I've done. There is no answer.

(KU-LIEN enters DR)

KU-LIEN

One of the soldiers wants to see you. He is waiting in the courtyard.

MEI-LAN

Thank you, Ku-lien.

(MEI-LAN exits DR)

KU-LIEN

You've brought our family honor, Li-hsien.

LI-HSIEN

What do you mean?

KU-LIEN

I thought Mei-lan told you.

LI-HSIEN

Told me what?

KU-LIEN

You're the new Magistrate.

LI-HSIEN

Me?

KU-LIEN

You're head man now.

LI-HSIEN

I'm head man now.

KU-LIEN

As your father was, so are you now.

LI-HSIEN

I cannot believe this.

(MEI-LAN enters DR. LI-HSIEN starts DL)

MEI-LAN

Li-hsien !

LI-HSIEN

(*Not hearing Mei-lan*)

I'm going to walk in the Village.

(*LI-HSIEN exits DL*)

KU-LIEN

I thought you'd told him.

MEI-LAN

Why is he leaving now?

KU-LIEN

He cannot believe this honor has come to him.

MEI-LAN

A soldier has a message for Li-meng and no one can find him.

KU-LIEN

The message can wait.

MEI-LAN

The soldier says it's about the Japanese. It's urgent.

KU-LIEN

Li-meng needs rest, Mei-lan. He's tired.

MEI-LAN

Perhaps, Ku-lien.

(*MA enters DL*)

MA

Li-meng must report to the unit at once.

(*MA exits DL*)

KU-LIEN

The Japanese are coming again.

MEI-LAN

We're not sure.

KU-LIEN

I know they're coming again.

MEI-LAN

Wait and make sure.

KU-LIEN

Lung !

(*To MEI-LAN*)

This house will be burned again.

MEI-LAN

Don't get excited, Ku-lien.
(LUNG *appears DR*)

KU-LIEN

I've told you what to do many times when the Japanese come again, Lung.

LUNG

Yes, Ku-lien.

KU-LIEN

That time is here, Lung. Get ready to leave the Village.
(LUNG *exits DR*)

MEI-LAN

You must be more calm.

KU-LIEN

I'm a good guerrilla now, Mei-lan. When the Japanese arrive this time, they'll find very little.
(LI-MENG *enters DR*)

LI-MENG

Take what you can to the horses, Ku-lien. The Japanese are almost here.

(KU-LIEN *exits DR*. LI-MENG *paces angrily about the room*)

MEI-LAN

Ma found you, Li-meng.

LI-MENG

Yes.

MEI-LAN

And the Japanese are coming?

LI-MENG

With a small army. This time they're going to wipe us out. They'll kill every living, breathing thing. They'll level every house until the Village is as flat as a field. They'll burn, ravage, destroy every blade of wheat, every tendril of grass.

MEI-LAN

We'd better start for the hills, then.

LI-MENG

Not this time.

MEI-LAN

I don't understand you.

LI-MENG

Clear the Village. But I'm going to stay behind.

(MA enters down L. MA rushes over to LI-MENG)

MA

What is your plan, Li-meng?

LI-MENG

(To MEI-LAN)

The Village will be evacuated.

(MEI-LAN exits DR)

(To MA)

The Japanese'll be here in less than an hour. It will be getting dark then. We don't have time to remove all the grain.

MA

We must make time.

LI-MENG

My plan is to set up machine guns in this house, which dominates the Village. I'll stay behind and fire them. I'll run from one to the other and make as much noise as possible. The dwarfs do not like to lose men on these expeditions. They'll think a much larger force is here. They'll wait to bring up artillery.

MA

That'd give us quite a bit of time.

LI-MENG

It'd be dark by then.

MA

By tomorrow, the dwarfs could never reach us.

LI-MENG

It is agreed.

MA

Li is our best machine gunner. He should stay.

LI-MENG

I'm staying.

MA

It is not wise for the leader to risk his life.

LI-MENG

Carry out my orders.

MA

The men won't approve.

LI-MENG

You're losing valuable time. Do as I say.

(MA exits DL. KU-LIEN and LUNG enter DR. KU-LIEN and LUNG expertly strip the room of all that may be moved. It is done skillfully, indicating long preparation. LI enters DL with a light machine gun)

(Indicating window ULC)

By that window, Li.

(LI sets up the machine gun. LI-HSIEN enters DL. LI-HSIEN goes to LI-MENG)

LI-HSIEN

It's true. I'm the new Magistrate.

LI-MENG

You've earned it. Take over your responsibilities now. The Village is being evacuated.

LI-HSIEN

I will.

(Suddenly)

Where's Sun-Pao? He'd be pleased I'm the new Magistrate.

LI-MENG

He's dead. The dwarfs killed him.

LI-HSIEN

I didn't think he . . . that is . . . with only one arm . . .

LI-MENG

Sun-Pao died fighting. I couldn't keep him out of action.

LI-HSIEN

He has meant so much to us.

LI-MENG

He had some words for you before he died.

LI-HSIEN

For me?

LI-MENG

Yes. He said, "Your brother has knowledge and strength and courage. It is men like Li-hsien who will lead us. You and I prepare the way. It is for the Li-hsiens to finish what we've started."

LI-HSIEN

Why did Sun-Pao say that about me?

LI-MENG

You deserve it. Didn't you ask Kao to be bound over to you?

LI-HSIEN

Yes.

LI-MENG

Your life is in forfeit for Kao's. You know that.

LI-MENG

Yes, but I believe in Kao.

LI-MENG

But you believe in a good many other things, too. You started schools in the Village and worked out a just system of taxes; you have given the people good government. You've reclaimed yourself and the Village. For everyone who fights and dies, there must be one who lives and builds.

LI-HSIEN

You're saying that to me?

LI-MENG

I'm no longer Li-meng, the soldier. I'm Li-meng, known as the brother of Li-hsien.

LI-HSIEN

Life is a good thing, Li-meng.

LI-MENG

We've been through many things, Li-hsien. In this Village there has been a great awakening. Some day the Generalissimo will call you to Chungking. You may do for China what you've done for the Village.

(Abruptly)

Good luck! You have work to do.

LI-HSIEN

Aren't you coming?

LI-MENG

I have my work, too.

(LI-HSIEN exits DR. LI has set up the machine gun. LI exits DL. LUNG and KU-LIEN have cleared the room of everything that can be moved. LUNG and KU-LIEN exit DR. MA and WEN enter DL)

MA

We've decided against your staying, Li-meng.

WEN

You are too valuable.

LI-MENG

The dwarfs don't expect us to make a stand unless we're in force.
I'll escape at night and join you in the hills.

MA

Li could do this better.

LI-MENG

We've always met in the hills. This time it'll be no different.

MA

It is our fear that you've some other scheme in mind.

WEN

What is it?

(LI enters DL with another light machine gun)

LI-MENG

Set it up to control the doorway.

(LI sets up machine gun in the doorway. People can still pass through the door)

LI-MENG

Tomorrow you'll know of my plan. Do as I've ordered.

WEN

We have two choices: elect a new Captain or obey.

MA

There isn't time to elect anyone else.

WEN

(Firmly)

I do not understand you, Li-meng.

LI-MENG

I know that I must do it this way.

MA

We've our work to do.

(WEN, MA exit DL. MEI-LAN enters DR)

MEI-LAN

Do you have to stay, Li-meng?

LI-MENG

Yes, Mei-lan. Are you ready to leave? The others are about to go.

MEI-LAN

I'd like to fire one of these.

LI-MENG

You must go quickly.

MEI-LAN

You'll not let me stay?

LI-MENG

Go. It's an order.

(MEI-LAN exits DR slowly and not turning back)

LI

The machine guns are ready.

(LI exits DL. LUNG enters DR with a bowl of millet and some tea. LUNG wears a revolver and a guerrilla cap)

LI-MENG

You ought to be on your way, Lung.

LUNG

Here is some food, Young Master.

LI-MENG

(Pointing to machine gun ULC)

Put it by the machine gun.

LUNG

Would you like some bedding? It might be cold tonight.

LI-MENG

I'll keep warm, Lung.

(Looking closely)

Lung! What's that you're wearing?

LUNG

You're speaking to a soldier in the guerrilla army.

(LUNG and LI-MENG exchange salutes)

LI-MENG

Somehow, Lung, I'm glad you're the last one to leave.

LUNG

Goodbye, Li-meng.

LI-MENG

Goodbye, Lung.

(LUNG exits DR. LI-MENG goes to machine gun ULC and sits down behind it, sighting, fixing ammunition belt, and making preparations for firing. MEI-LAN enters DR and sits down by machine gun DL. LI-MENG hears MEI-LAN and turns)

I thought you'd gone.

MEI-LAN

You knew I'd come back.

LI-MENG

I did not allow myself such thoughts.

MEI-LAN

Why are you staying?

LI-MENG

This time I couldn't leave.

MEI-LAN

Nor can I.

LI-MENG

If the dwarfs do not believe the Village is defended in force, we'll be killed.

MEI-LAN

I know it.

LI-MENG

Do you want to die?

MEI-LAN

Do you?

LI-MENG

I don't know. Perhaps I do. But this time when I knew the dwarfs were coming, I couldn't leave. I'd been expecting this attack for months now. We're too strong here. But it made no difference. I had to stay.

MEI-LAN

You're denying all that you say you believe in.

LI-MENG

Nine years of retreating, of burying the dead, of watching the dying, of the smell of death—and then my family, my village was burned. And it was born again. Beautiful and perfect. My family lived again in the new way of things. My brother is the new Magistrate, and now the dwarfs come and this time I stay.

MEI-LAN

You're being unreasonable.

LI-MENG

I'll stay behind these guns fighting. The dwarfs will kill me but I will not run. I'll face them, fighting. They'll pay a price for every inch of ground. I can never retreat again.

MEI-LAN

I can't either.

LI-MENG

The people need you. You're the only one in the province with any medical training.

MEI-LAN

They need you.

LI-MENG

There'll be other leaders but no one can take your place.

MEI-LAN

You're our greatest leader, Li-meng. Thousands depend on you.

LI-MENG

It is wrong for you to stay.

MEI-LAN

What is worth more to you than life?

LI-MENG

My village, my house, my family, my brother . . .

MEI-LAN

That's not how I feel. I'm not staying for those reasons.

LI-MENG

What is greater to you than service to our people?

MEI-LAN

You are.

LI-MENG

I am!

MEI-LAN

I would not go on living without you.

LI-MENG

I wonder . . . if . . .

MEI-LAN

I believe in our people, in service and sacrifice, and I believe in China—but I love you. You gave me strength when I was full of self-pity and wanted to die. You gave me something to believe in when my mind was a broken thing. But my strength is your strength. I would not live without you.

LI-MENG

Mei-lan! I was going to die because I thought we could never love each other.

MEI-LAN

We do love each other, Li-meng, here . . . now . . .

LI-MENG

I love you, Mei-lan. I never want to die.

MEI-LAN

We're strong again, Li-meng.

LI-MENG

Love makes you weak and then it makes you strong.

MEI-LAN

We'll never weaken again, Li-meng. When the dwarfs are gone, there's a China to build. Our work will grow and grow.

LI-MENG

As our love will grow and grow . . .

MEI-LAN

All over China, all over the world, there are people like us—who will fight and build, and love.

LI-MENG

As human beings with human desires . . .

(LI-HSIEN enters DR. LI-HSIEN wears standard guerrilla equipment: pistol, hand grenades)

LI-HSIEN

I'll work the machine guns, Li-meng. Mei-lan, there's still time if you hurry.

LI-MENG

Why are you here?

LI-HSIEN

I'm head man of the Village, Li-meng. I'm expected to defend it.

LI-MENG

You don't know how to handle a machine gun.

LI-HSIEN

It's part of our village training.

MEI-LAN

You understand the Village now, Li-hsien. You must be ready to come back and build it again. And you'll be needed to carry your work here to many other villages.

LI-HSIEN

I know what I must do to lift the pain from my heart. Let me fight the rearguard action. I know the surrounding country. I can run to the hills when it's dark.

LI-MENG

I like to see you feeling this way.

LI-HSIEN

I've brought death to this house. Now I can bring back life.

LI-MENG

You must join Ku-lien.

LI-HSIEN

Father would like to know that I'm the head of the Village and that you're the guerrilla leader.

LI-MENG

And that Mei-lan belongs now to the House of Chou.

LI-HSIEN

Grandmother would be pleased.

MEI-LAN

When will we win, Li-meng? When will the fighting be over?

LI-MENG

When no living dwarf remains on China's soil.

(KU-LIEN *rushes in DR*)

KU-LIEN

I came back to find my husband. I saw a car of dwarfs approaching the Village.

LI-MENG

They're advance scouts. Did the dwarfs see you?

KU-LIEN

No.

LI-MENG

Can you work a machine gun, Ku-lien?

KU-LIEN

Yes.

LI-MENG

Can you, Mei-lan?

MEI-LAN

Yes.

LI-MENG

Shoot whenever you see a moving object in the range of your machine guns. Don't worry. It won't be us.

(*Quickly*)

Come on, Li-hsien. Dwarf hunting looks good.

(LI-MENG and LI-HSIEN *exit DR*. KU-LIEN *takes the machine gun ULC* and MEI-LAN *goes to gun DL*)

MEI-LAN

How many dwarfs were there?

KU-LIEN

Eight or nine.

MEI-LAN

They must think the Village deserted.

KU-LIEN

I've waited a long time for this.

MEI-LAN

Are you afraid, Ku-lien?

KU-LIEN

We do not kill human beings, Mei-lan.

MEI-LAN

I'm not afraid. Sitting here behind a machine gun, waiting to kill—I'm not afraid.

KU-LIEN

Do you see anything?

MEI-LAN

No.

KU-LIEN

Do you hear anything?

MEI-LAN

It's quiet.

KU-LIEN

The brothers will be happy to fight together. They'll have a good plan.

(MEI-LAN rises as she looks out into the growing twilight. MEI-LAN seems compelled to speak out. She speaks softly, but her voice has power and feeling)

MEI-LAN

Come, you barbarians. You dwarfs. You unreasonable dwarfs. You brave little people in your tanks, your armored cars, your airplanes. You warriors against women and children and grandmothers and workers in the fields. You fighters against the people. You're fighting something you don't understand. Something that's passed from man to man, from father to son, from mother to child. We're not fighting for this land, this soil, this earth beneath our feet. We're not fighting for China alone. We're fighting to tell you that there are some things that you can't do to people without destroying yourselves. You can't kill us . . . me, Ku-lien, Li-hsien, Li-meng,

the villagers, the people. You can't destroy the spirit of man. You'll never stop this village from rising again. Always the people will rise again and the spirit that is in them will conquer.

(Hand grenades start to explode. There is rifle and pistol fire. KU-LIEN and MEI-LAN wait. The noise of the fighting grows nearer. The time comes for KU-LIEN and MEI-LAN to use the machine guns. The din is terrific. In time, the fighting dies down. Then it flares up again. KU-LIEN and MEI-LAN shoot their machine guns again. Suddenly there is silence. LI-MENG and LI-HSIEN enter DL. They are dirty and sweaty but unharmed)

LI-MENG

Ku-lien, there are guns, ammunition, wristwatches in the courtyard—and they've left us a truck to carry it away in.

(To MEI-LAN)

Precious guns. At least a thousand rounds of ammunition. Medical equipment.

(To KU-LIEN)

Quick. Collect it all. Put everything usable in the truck.

(KU-LIEN smiles and exits DL)

MEI-LAN

It'll be a pleasure to help her.

(MEI-LAN exits DL)

(LI-MENG and LI-HSIEN are tired from the fighting. They sit down for a moment)

LI-HSIEN

The dwarfs have been kind to us.

LI-MENG

They have been kind indeed. Kind enough to kill my family and trample on the graves of my ancestors. Kind enough to pillage and destroy, to rape, murder and desecrate the name of man. Kind enough to show all men the bottomless depths of their hate, their tortuous, twisted, terrible hate; their hate so monstrous that it destroys itself. Destroys itself by showing us how much we love our families, our friends, our countrymen, our native soil. Destroys itself by overshadowing and brushing aside the little fears and prejudices that divide us, by making brothers of us all. If they have done that, they have indeed been kind.

(Rising and turning to LI-HSIEN)

Take the car and hide it.

LI-HSIEN

I could go down the sunken road and cover the car with bamboo.

LI-MENG

Yes.

LI-HSIEN

What will the dwarfs do now?

LI-MENG

I don't know. The advance scouts have been killed. Will the dwarfs attack in force now? Will they shell the town? Will they wait until morning? I don't know.

LI-HSIEN

Come with me, while there's time.

LI-MENG

A carload of guns, ammunition, and medical supplies is worth the risk of my life. I am the most experienced fighter. So I remain behind. Do you agree?

LI-HSIEN

There's no argument. I agree.

(MEI-LAN enters DL with KU-LIEN)

KU-LIEN

The car is almost loaded.

LI-HSIEN

I leave the House of Chou without shame. Ku-lien! If the Generalissimo needs us, we'll go to Chungking.

LI-MENG

Li-hsien! Ku-lien! The world lies before you.

LI-HSIEN

(Almost happily)

Goodbye, Mei-lan! Goodbye, Li-meng.

(Tenderly looking at the k'ang)

Goodbye, Grandmother.

(LI-HSIEN and KU-LIEN exit DL. LI-MENG and MEI-LAN look at each other)

(MEI-LAN starts to gun URC. She stops)

MEI-LAN

Oh. (Going to gun DL) This is my gun.

(LI-MENG goes to gun ULC. MEI-LAN takes her place at gun DL)

CURTAIN

PRODUCTION NOTES

ACT ONE—SCENE I

GRANDMOTHER

GRANDMOTHER is a small, slightly stooped, frail woman with a deeply wrinkled face. She is kind but shrewd. Her thin, white hair is drawn straight back to a round knot at the back of her head held with a decorative silver hairpin. She has a black band cut in characteristic Chinese fashion around her head, fastening under her knot of hair. There is a pearl or jade in a silver setting center front. Her earrings are small loops of silver, and her bracelet a twisted silver cord. She wears a jade ring. Gold may be used instead of silver, but all the jewelry must be of the same metal.

She wears a jacket of black silk, self-brocaded in a small conventional pattern and with a double binding of black satin. The loose jacket is cut in Chinese style with a collar of medium height and loose full-length sleeves. (The older a Chinese woman, the longer and looser her clothing.) Buttons on the jacket are made of a narrow strip of bias binding of self material tied into an intricate knot to form a small round button. There is one button at the collar, one right front, and three on the right under-arm seam. The jacket is finger-tip length.

The ankle-length skirt is of heavy black brocaded silk with a plain panel down the front and back, and narrow pleating at the side.

She wears white cotton socks. Small black satin boat-shaped shoes, with no arch, instep, or heel, cover her bound feet. She walks with short stiff steps as if walking on the heel of the foot without touching the ball of the foot to the ground.

When greeting guests or leaving the room, she bows from

the waist, holding arms together with hands inside opposite sleeves.

KU-LIEN

KU-LIEN is of medium height, slender, subdued but self-possessed. Her manner is gentle and restrained.

KU-LIEN's heavy black hair is drawn smoothly back into a vertically oblong knot, held with a simple silver pin. Several jasmine flowers are fastened into the knot. She wears small silver earrings set with jade and a plain jade bracelet.

Her jacket is of similar design to GRANDMOTHER'S but is shorter, closer fitting, and has a higher collar. It is made of soft blue-gray self-brocaded silk with self-colored satin binding around the collar, the sleeves, the bottom and the opening. The side buttons and all buttonholes are of the same satin with fancy frogs. The buttons at the neck and shoulder are of large, artificial pearls.

She wears loose black silk trousers, reaching to the ankle. Her feet are of natural size, her shoes heelless black satin slippers embroidered in color.

BABY

The BABY which KU-LIEN carries is held in a bright-colored red cotton quilt wrapped triangularly into a firm bundle. The peak of a fancy bright pink crocheted woolen cap shows above the quilt.

MEI-LAN

MEI-LAN is taller than KU-LIEN and very beautiful. Her motions are quick and spontaneous. She is intelligent and strong-willed.

MEI-LAN's black hair is in a thick braid reaching to her waist, bound at the neck and at end in heavy red silk embroidery floss. She has rather long bangs across the forehead.

She wears a long tight-fitting gown with short sleeves and a very high, stiff, close-fitting collar, closing with three buttons. The gown is of printed silk crepe in a gay, bold pattern of color on a white background. The gown reaches below the ankle and is slit on each side to just above the knee, showing

flesh-colored silk stockings and black leather slippers with a Cuban heel, a strap across the instep. Her dress has a very wide double binding of two shades of matching satin around the collar, sleeves, opening, bottom, and side slits. The side buttons and very elaborate frogs are of the material used for the binding. The bottom button on the collar and two on the shoulder are jewelled and have large frogs.

A brocaded material might be used instead of the print for MEI-LAN'S dress. The cut would be the same, but the material might be colored silk brocaded with a design in light gold. The broad binding would be in matching color with a piping of gold. The frogs would be of the two colors; and the buttons, large, yellow, artificial gems.

MASTER CHOU

MASTER CHOU wears a long full gown, ankle length, the collar fastened with one button. It is made of soft dove-gray silk self-brocaded in a small scattered flower design. Buttons are on the right side. They are the knotted buttons made of self material without frogs. Long full-length sleeves reach to the wrist. There are slits at the side to middle thigh showing long full trousers of blue silk bound tight to the ankles with an inch to an inch and a half black band or ribbon, wound round and round the ankle with the ends tucked in so that no ends show. Black satin slippers are of flat Chinese style. The hair is cut short or shaved. The black satin Chinese skullcap has a red button on the top. MASTER CHOU (FATHER) carries a large fan which he uses as a way of expression, pointing it to the person he is addressing, flipping it open or closing it sharply.

MASTER FAN

MASTER FAN is dressed as MASTER CHOU except that his gown is of a mustard-brown silk with all-over silk brocade in a conventional pattern.

LI-HSIEN

LI-HSIEN has an ordinary Western style haircut. He wears a long gown, not quite so full as the older men's, ankle length,

with a two-inch collar, buttoning with a single button at the neck. There is one button on the right shoulder and three or four under the right arm. His gown is made of plain deep blue silk. Under the gown he wears gray cotton twill trousers of Western cut, gray socks, and black leather oxfords. He carries a Western brown felt hat when he leaves.

LI-MENG

LI-MENG also has an ordinary haircut. His long gown is like LI-HSIEN'S but is made of fine light blue cotton broadcloth. Khaki trousers, Western style, are under the gown. He has tan socks and brown leather oxfords.

LUNG

LUNG wears a long-sleeved ankle-length gray gown of cotton material that is coarser than that of LI-MENG'S but finer than that of the peasants. He has loose Chinese style trousers to match. They are bound at the ankles with black cotton bands. He wears white socks and heavy, gray, thick cloth-soled slippers. LUNG'S gown is cut similar to those of the other men. He is cold and restrained, never losing dignity and never betraying emotion.

SUN-PAO

SUN-PAO wears Western style clothes, badly cut and rather wrinkled. They are made of cheap salt-and-pepper cotton suiting. He has a white shirt, cheap silk tie and dusty leather shoes.

FARMERS, PEASANTS (FENG, MEI, TAI)

The FARMERS have the head shaved or hair cut short. They wear short, loose, coarse cotton jackets, open at front showing bare chests. The clothes are of various shades of faded blue and gray. Long, loose Chinese trousers are free at the ankle or are frequently rolled above the knee. Straw sandals are worn on sockless feet. Jacket and trousers are often neatly patched.

RICE MERCHANT WEN

WEN wears a long, dark gray cotton gown of the same style

as MASTER CHOU. The rest of the costume is the same except that he wears leather shoes and a Western style felt hat which he fails to remove.

ACT ONE—SCENE 2

MASTER CHOU AND MASTER FAN

They are dressed as in ACT ONE, SCENE 1, with the addition of a jacket of a stiff black brocaded silk. Long, full sleeves cover the other sleeves completely. The jackets have five buttons down the center front. The collar is the same as that on the gown. Gowns may be the same as those worn in SCENE 1 or any dull shade of blue, gray, or brown.

MEI-LAN

MEI-LAN'S hair has been curled and is cut in a long page boy bob. She wears a practical red and white plaid gingham dress with narrow binding of red, and red knotted buttons and frogs of the same style as SCENE 1. The collar is lower with only one button; the sleeves are shorter. Her leather slippers have a medium heel.

LI-MENG

LI-MENG is dressed in a travel-stained khaki uniform of the Chinese Army.

LI-HSIEN

LI-HSIEN wears a Western business suit of good quality worsted. It is of conservative cut. The shirt, ties, and socks are carefully and tastefully selected. The general effect is that of what a diplomat should wear.

LUNG, GRANDMOTHER

Same as SCENE 1.

KU-LIEN

Same as SCENE 1 or similar to SCENE 1 with changes in color.

ACT TWO—SCENE 1

GRANDMOTHER, LUNG

Same as ACT ONE.

MEI-LAN

The style of dress is similar to that of ACT ONE, but the dress is shorter and the binding narrower. Any printed cotton or silk material may be used.

MASTER CHOU AND MASTER FAN

Type of dress should be the same as ACT ONE, SCENE 1, but the materials may be changed.

LI-HSIEN

LI-HSIEN wears wrinkled dirty American clothes.

LI-MENG

LI-MENG wears the costume of ACT ONE, SCENE 2.

GUERRILLAS

The GUERRILLAS wear worn, ill-fitting gray cotton uniforms, gray socks, straw sandals.

ACT TWO—SCENE 2

ALL

ALL wear the same costumes as in SCENE 1, but show effects of what they have been through.

JAPANESE SOLDIERS

The JAPANESE SOLDIERS wear the uniform of the Japanese Army.

ACT THREE

LI-MENG AND GUERRILLAS

LI-MENG and the GUERRILLAS wear the same costume as in ACT TWO.

LI-HSIEN

LI-HSIEN'S long blue cotton robe is styled like his gown in ACT ONE, SCENE I.

LUNG

Wears the same costume as before until his change into a guerrilla uniform.

MEI-LAN

Her simple bright blue cotton gown is styled as in ACT TWO, SCENE I.

KU-LIEN

She is dressed in the same style as MEI-LAN. The color of her dress is a different shade of the same "Kuomintang Blue" worn by MEI-LAN. She wears low-heeled, white canvas strap slippers and tan stockings. Her hair is bobbed and straight.

BOY

Dressed in same style as peasants. He has a shaved head. He wears no socks and may go barefoot or wear straw sandals.

GIRL

GIRL'S dress is cut as GRANDMOTHER'S in first scene, but is of cheap cotton material. Her black hair is cut with bangs and is braided in two pigtailed bound with bright-colored thread. She wears cloth slippers.

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